

The Bird Flu – Chapter 13

"Can you make chili, Britney?" I asked.

"Not as good as Dad can, but yes, I can make chili."

"I'll eat it. Sharon doesn't like cooked tomatoes and I don't like her chili."

"Let's get the ammo into the shelter, Dad. I'll put the beans and rice down there later."

"Don't forget the onions and chili powder."

"I won't. So, you think we're going to have an earthquake?"

"I hope not. That would be a double disaster, what with the entire Valley up here. I've always believed that bad things happen in 3s. It may be an old wives tale, but the evidence suggests otherwise. I'd better go, I wouldn't want to be anywhere but home, if we do have an earthquake."

We had done a lot of things to make sure things wouldn't get destroyed if we did have an earthquake. The furniture was anchored, there were clasps on all of the doors and earthquake putty was used to hold things in place. Down in the shelter, not one thing was loose and capable of falling over or sliding off a shelf. The shelter had plenty of rebar in its construction and should hold together, no matter what. Years before, I'd purchased an earthquake alarm, but it only worked if you slammed into the column it was mounted on. It didn't go off during the Northridge quake and that shook the house badly.

Vern Hughes and I had been in Seattle doing audits when Loma Prieta hit. In fact we'd just sat down in a bar to watch the World Series when the screen flashed earthquake. That was a bad one, destroying the Marina District and collapsing the Nimitz Freeway (I-880). However, it didn't damage our house, while Northridge did. It wasn't much, just a crack in the stucco, but we were about 50 miles from the epicenter. What would it be like if we were only 3 miles from the epicenter? Nothing we could do about it if it happened, except survive.

Of more immediate concern was the fact that Lance had seen fit to change the security setup for the housing tract. This had me concerned because not all that long ago, I'd gotten shot and lost 5 months of my life while my brain rearranged itself. Ron and Clarence didn't seem to be worried, but I was worried enough for all of us. There was one camp set up in the stadium for Palmdale High School, less than 3 miles away.

I didn't feel any remorse over killing 3 people simply because I couldn't remember it. Perhaps that was part of the reason behind the memory loss, rather than cope with it, my little bitty brain just turned it off. I had no war experience to fall back on and had managed to get to 65 years of age before I'd had to pull the trigger on another human

being. If I couldn't remember it, that meant that if the occasion ever arose again, it would be the first time, again. Yogi would say, "It's like déjà vu all over again."

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A person has to give the President credit, by imposing a quarantine many people had been spared from the bird flu. In the same vein, if we hadn't started the war, could we blame him? We could, for getting us in the dire straits that led up to the war. I have no doubt in my mind that Dubya thinks he's a Patriot. I have no doubt in my mind that he did what he thought was best for the country by getting us into Iraq. Conversely, his entire attitude was pointed in the direction of directly confronting the countries he perceived to be our enemies.

Apparently, he hadn't heard about the so called 'peace dividend' that allowed our military to be cut back too far. While I don't know the origin of the term, many date it from '85 or '87. George H. W. Bush was the first President to cut the military, if I remember right. It doesn't matter, none of it does, because we could only have peace in our present times, the war had seen to that. In fact, it was so peaceful, I doubted that 10,000 rounds of 7.62x51mm ammo would be enough. On some days the scars hurt, reminding me to count my ammo, again.

The Bird Flu was a blessing in disguise; many of us were ready when the war came. We started to get serious with our preps in 2006, for different reasons. Who would have thought that we'd actually need the shelter? I did, that's why we refinanced the house and built it. That's why we stocked up on everything from food to toilet paper and I bought more firearms and more ammo. The shaking heads stopped shaking when they were invited into the shelter, the day TSHTF.

Stretched Too Thin By Kay Bailey Hutchison

"You may fly over a land forever; you may bomb it, atomize it, pulverize it and wipe it clean of life – but if you desire to defend it, protect it and keep it for civilization, you must do this on the ground, the way the Roman legions did, by putting your young men into the mud."

Those words, written nearly 40 years ago by my good friend T.R. Fehrenbach in the definitive work on the Korean War, "This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness" – still ring true today. Our recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq reinforce those very lessons. We prosecuted a very successful war, but if we are going to bring freedom and democracy to the Iraqi and Afghan people while preserving the peace elsewhere, we will need young men and women with their boots on the ground. I am increasingly concerned we don't have enough soldiers and Marines to do all the jobs that must be done.

Shortly before he retired, Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki advised that postwar Iraq might require several hundred thousand soldiers and Marines to keep the peace. Gen. Shinseki commanded peacekeeping operations in both Bosnia and Kosovo, and he

knows what it takes to get the job done right. But if we were to place several hundred thousand troops in Iraq, the unfortunate truth is that the Army may be stretched too thin elsewhere. Indeed, the man nominated to take his place, Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker, is another who apparently doesn't shy from offering his frank opinion. He recently said, "Intuitively, I think we need more people. It's as simple as that."

When the first Gulf War ended, the Department of Defense cashed in a peace dividend from the end of the Cold War when it lowered the strength of the US Army active forces from 750,000 to 535,000 troops. That cut was necessary, but then they cut more and in doing so, reduced the Army's active strength to 491,000 – too low for our current requirements.

Today, in addition to the 491,000 active-duty Army soldiers, there are 550,000 members of the Reserve and National Guard. In order to keep 370,000 of our soldiers deployed to more than 100 countries, we have called to active duty an unprecedented 136,000 members of the Reserve and National Guard.

There is an abundance of anecdotal evidence of the toll this overuse is taking on our troops. Recently, I talked to family members of some reserve units who have seen their loved ones deployed again and again. They are proud of their service but made it clear that, when their tour of duty is over, they will be hanging up their boots and leaving the Reserve. This is not an isolated view. Many senior members of our military have candidly expressed concerns that we are asking our Reserves to deploy too often. They believe it may hurt our efforts to recruit new reservists and retain the ones we have.

The Army recently announced a sound plan to replace units in Iraq with a mix of active-duty and reserve forces. When our units in Kosovo, Bosnia and the Sinai Peninsula complete their six-month rotations, they will be replaced with National Guard units. There is no question they can do the job. But should they? This rotation plan only serves as a tacit admission that we need more force structure. Our guard members and reservists signed up to defend our nation in times of national emergency and stand ready to do just that. They never expected to augment the day-to-day missions of active-duty forces.

In the months ahead, the Pentagon promises numerous studies to examine the impact of answering the calls worldwide. But these studies are addressing the symptoms and not the illness.

We must not balance the tempo of how and when we use Reserve units on the backs of active-duty units, and vice versa. We need more troops or fewer missions. Before we lose too many trained and qualified reservists, I hope we address the critical issue: Do we have enough Army and Marine active-duty members for the post-September 11 era of national security? My view is: We do not.

That was written 5 years ago, in 2003. When she wrote that, the death toll of American Servicemen in Iraq and Afghanistan was far less than the final total. I wonder if Dubya

ever regretted flying to the aircraft carrier and declaring the war over. That was over 3,000 lives ago, on our side. That figure pales in light of the global pandemic and the subsequent war. Some thought we had it bad when we were losing people in Iraq. When the pandemic broke out, they said this was the worst thing to happen to the country since 1918. I can't tell what they said after the war, all we had was KTPI broadcasting local news.

I didn't remember being shot, nor being in the hospital, nor sitting and counting the number of stars my screensaver was putting on the screen. I remember coming to one day and discovering a well healed, but sometimes painful, scar, front and back. I was skinny again, but as someone once told me when I told them I'd lost weight, 'You'll find it.'

If I ate 3 waffles every morning for breakfast, I was sure I would. I cut back to a measured portion of cereal, there wasn't a whole lot of that left. I could always eat pancakes and waffles, but I did like my vanilla almond Special K. When we were loading up on food way back when, we cut several hams into slices separated with plastic wrap before we froze the ham. We also loaded up on bacon because it was processed meat and we couldn't make it. No doubt the same people that thought we were crazy at the time wished they had done the same thing.

Although the war had been over 6 months ago, I wondered what the country had done about the surprise attack. After Pearl Harbor, we had reacted with all speed, bombing Tokyo a little more than 4 months later. That was before we had intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons. Now we could launch on warning. No doubt uncertain as to whether or not our missile silos were targeted, we'd launched the Minuteman III missiles. It was a crying shame about those Peacekeepers, those 50 missiles could do more damage than all of our Minutemen.

Now, long after the attack, I was trying to figure out what had happened. I could remember the premonition I'd had and how, nine days later, it came true. I could remember Air Force One on the TV departing Andrews. Where had he gone? Why hadn't the government taken steps to restore communications? The state Military Reserve and National Guard had been mobilized because of the bird flu, how many of them had been in large cities when the attack came?

After 38 days in the shelter, the radiation level was low enough for Ron and me to suit up and leave the shelter. With Lance in charge, we'd set about protecting the housing tract. It went very well, right up to the night I got shot. Derek's family and Damon had shown up and while I was out of it Damon's kids came. If I were planning an attack on the US, I'd hit the 100 largest cities, all metropolitan areas, and some of the military bases. I wouldn't bother to try and take out the missile silos, they'd all be empty. If I were dumb enough to do it, in the first place. Nobody wins a global thermonuclear war, we all lose. If a computer could figure that out from playing Tic-Tac-Toe, why couldn't every government who possessed nuclear weapons? Only the Russians were prepared for a nuclear attack. We had long ago abandoned Civil Defense.

A survivalist is a person who anticipates and prepares for a future disruption in local, regional or worldwide social or political order. Survivalism is a commonly used term for the subculture or movement of people who make such preparations. Survivalists often prepare for this anticipated disruption by learning skills (e.g., emergency medical training), stockpiling food and water, or building structures that will help them to survive (e.g., an underground shelter). The specific preparations made by survivalists depend on the nature of the anticipated disruption, some of the most commonly anticipated being:

- Natural disasters, such as tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, blizzards, and severe thunderstorms.
- A disaster brought about by the activities of humankind: chemical spills, release of radioactive materials, war, or more recently Global Warming.
- General collapse of society, resulting from the unavailability of electricity, fuel, food, and water.
- Widespread chaos, or some other apocalyptic event.

That shoe fits, I couldn't deny it, not that I wanted to. We didn't have many tornadoes, hurricanes or blizzards in Palmdale. We were far enough from the coast that it would take a very large tsunami to get over the mountains. That left earthquakes and severe thunderstorms. We already had a general collapse of society and widespread chaos. Only because there weren't more people who were survivalists. It was so political incorrect to wear that label, I didn't care.

I didn't consider a thunderstorm to be a disaster; the most that could happen was we got too much rain or struck by lightning. The mast was grounded and I had Alpha Delta lightening arresters. We'd never had the street fill up with water, not in the 21 years we'd lived here. Which only left an earthquake to worry about, or getting shot, again. I left out the terrorist attacks, because, what more could terrorists do to us? Global Warming after a nuclear war? Not likely, the problem would be the cold.

Just in case you don't know about our surge capacity, can you tell me where the Ronald Reagan is? In 2007, it was in Japan, having been surged. That gave us 2 carriers in the Middle East and 2 in the Far East. What is the steaming time from Japan to the Persian Gulf? I don't really know, but it couldn't take that long, maybe a week. One of the reasons my stories are so possible is that they're based on current news, something we hadn't had since the war. For all I know, 'they' sunk our carrier strike groups, but I'd put my money on us and not the other guy. We knew the Aegis equipped ships worked just fine, the Aegis system was involved in an incident in which USS Vincennes mistakenly shot down Iran Air Flight 655 in 1988 resulting in 290 civilian fatalities.

Using the Aegis system, Vincennes's captain believed the Iran Air Airbus A300B2 was a much smaller Iran Air Force F-14A Tomcat jet fighter descending on an attack vector, when in fact the Airbus was climbing on its normal civilian flight path. This was due to the fact that the Aegis radar system had temporarily lost Flight 655 and reassigned its

track number to an F-14A Tomcat fighter that it had previously seen. The CO, Captain Will C. Rogers III (Will Rogers's grandson), acted to defend his ship and gave the order to fire a missile at the aircraft, later found to be Iran Air Flight 655. We fired 2 SM-2 missiles at the Airbus. The SM-3 has been tested with success and will either supplement or replace the SM-2.

However, none of that matters anymore, we had our war and everybody lost. I still have ammo so maybe Einstein was wrong, WW IV will be fought with M14 rifles. Do you think? Probably not, they'd have to tool up to build them and all of the factories are gone. Then they have to switch ammo production from 5.56x45mm to 7.62x51mm, another major tooling exercise. I find it refreshing that even though McNamara dropped the M14, they were still using them in combat this decade. He's like all politicians; he'd never admit he was wrong.

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I talked to Lance several times about our security, suggesting that we shouldn't have backed off, not with the number of people we had in the Valley now. He insisted that our guard force was more than adequate. The only concession I got was creating a backup force for the guards. We had plenty of shotguns and several rifles, mostly in the hands of the homeowners. As Lance and Derek cleared the new folks, they had been issued shotguns and shells although a few with prior military experience were issued rifles. Some were military rifles, but most were hunting rifles, this was still California.

I had gotten in fair shape physically before the shooting, but sitting on my duff for 5 months left me in the same condition I was in when the bird flu arose. I had a small set of weights I'd never used, but started to use them to restore some of the muscle tone I'd lost. The same effect happens when you break your arm and it's put in a cast, when the cast comes off, your arm has shrunk due to disuse. I must be gaining back some of the weight, the gun belt doesn't slide off anymore.

"Are the two of you free for coffee?"

"I will be as soon as I finish my honey dos. Want me to pick up Clarence and come over?"

"Might be a good idea, besides I got more ammo from Damon."

"It will be after lunch."

"That's fine, I'm not doing anything and have all day free."

"Say, did you get those gas drums filled?"

"How much do you need? I'm sure we have all you need."

"I'll bring my cans, should Clarence bring his?"

"All he has, Damon and Aaron found a tanker and the fuel is stabilized."

"See ya."

"Bye."

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Life went on, a daily grind. We got through the winter of '08 and into '09. We have 4 seasons in Palmdale, but not like Tehachapi. They have the snow that we almost never got. We did this winter, lots of it. Enough that I really wished I still had a snow blower. It took several days for the city, working 24/7 to clear the roads. About the time they finished, it would snow again. Thank God we didn't get ice storms or it would have all been over. South of Palmdale was the power lines that fed the city its electricity. One coat of ice and we'd have been on the generators all winter.

We had the next best thing to a snow blower, grandchildren. Not that we had a snow shovel, we didn't and you couldn't get out to get one, had they been available, which they were not. That relieved my security concerns; nobody was going anywhere, least of all, not the thieves.

The ambient temperature of the shelter was perfect for storing potatoes and onions. The things that one family lacked, one of the others had and we exchanged, bartered and did what it took to get through the long winter. Meanwhile, I found a little of the lost weight, regained my strength and stopped contemplating the whys and wherefores of the war. Neither did I give much thought to the next disaster; it just had to be an earthquake.

We were content to eat, sleep, cook, wash dishes and watch movies on the TV using the DVD player. Ron, Clarence and I would touch bases every afternoon, for a few minutes, on the radio. Twice a week, I'd venture into the shelter and bring up enough food for the next few days. After all we'd been through, life was mundane and boring. For as long as there was snow on the ground, it stayed that way.

According to the theory, a nuclear winter is followed by a nuclear summer. The amount of water in the stratosphere would increase, causing greenhouse warming of the surface. The nuclear detonations would also produce oxides of nitrogen that would then deplete the ozone layer around the Earth. This layer screens out UV-B radiation from the Sun, which causes genetic damage to life forms on the surface. Possibilities of any existing species to survive in this extreme condition will be less. The absorption of ozone also results in a heating of the stratosphere, which results in a further contribution to greenhouse heating.

When it began to warm, the snow melted and ran the gutters full of water for a couple of weeks. The temperature continued to climb, making up for lost time. When it was warm enough, we planted another garden. The temperature continued to rise, in June it was as hot as it usually got in late July or early August. The only way we had to protect the plants was garden netting. We had loaded up on that early, I'd read a bit on the subjects of nuclear winter and nuclear summer. The melting snow provided a fair amount of sub-surface moisture and when the garden began to dry out, we irrigated. I could see that we'd have a huge crop of green beans, potatoes, onions, tomatoes, beets, carrots and so forth.

The crop of potatoes from the previous summer could have lasted into this fall/winter had we not shared. Not being much of a gardener, my help consisted of hoeing and later helping to pick green beans. If life was back to normal, why was I still carrying a rifle everywhere I went? Life was NOT back to normal and never would be, probably not for years.

As we began to harvest, Lance upped the security force, adding more residents, armed with shotguns and rifles. The roadblock was reinstalled and down where I'd stopped the intruders, he mounted 3 guards. Behind Dick's house was that large vacant lot that had been on the market for 30 years and never sold. In Dick's backyard, Dave and Dick erected a platform about 4' off the ground with a cover. They could sit there and keep an eye over the west fence. The south wall of the housing tract, my back wall, abutted up against a row of homes in the adjoining housing tract. We'd never had any problem from that direction, except for the loud party noise.

All summer long Sharon and the girls canned. We got flour, sugar and corn meal as commodities. Added to what we were getting from the garden, the only thing we got short on was meat. Then, word came that all of the grocery stores had meat, lots and lots of meat. Each person was entitled to an allocation, no charge, but if you wanted extra it was quite expensive. We hadn't taken any money out of the Iowa account for over a year. If they didn't earn any income, they could cover the checks I wrote with the trust principal. The banking system was rudimentary, but over the winter, it was sufficiently restored that the stores now took checks. We went to the nearest store, Albertsons and got our allocations.

It didn't appear to be enough by half, so we bought more and wrote a check on the Iowa account. All she looked at was the address and phone number on the check and compared it to Sharon's driver's license. Why she circled the phone number was anyone's guess, habit I suppose. Fact was, we still didn't have phones. They also had cheese, most of it California cheese, but cheese was cheese. Ron and Clarence were there too, loading up for a long winter.

"Why don't you guys come by after you get everything put away?"

"What's up?"

"Nothing and everything, I just want to talk."

"Fellas, I don't know that this was Armageddon as it's described in Revelations, it could have been, but I sort of doubt it. Armageddon is the Plain of Megiddo and it's as much a place as a symbol. Maybe the first seal has been broken – I have no idea. The four horsemen of the Apocalypse are described in just eight verses of the book of Revelation, which is the last book in the bible. The four horsemen appear when the Lamb (Jesus) opens the first four seals of a scroll with seven seals, which is described in Revelation chapter 6. As each of the first four seals are opened a different colored horse and its rider is seen by the apostle John as described in Rev 6:1-8.

"First seal is opened: a white horse appears, its rider held a bow, conquest. (Rev 6:1-8 NIV) I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, 'Come!' I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

"Second seal is opened: a red horse appears, its rider holds a sword, war. When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, 'Come!' Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword.

"Third seal is opened: a black horse appears, its rider holds a pair of scales, famine. When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, 'Come!' I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, 'A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!'

"Fourth seal is opened: a pale horse appears, its rider is called Death. When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, 'Come!' I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

"The fifth seal reveals those who had been slain because of the word of God and their testimony, that is the persecuted church. The sixth seal reveals the day of the Lord, which brings the Lamb's wrath to those on the earth. The opening of the seventh seal reveals silence. The seven seals sum up human history from the viewpoint of heaven and the church. There is war, famine and pestilence in general and on the church in particular there is persecution, then the end will come bringing terror to the world, this probably accounts for the silence of the seventh seal.

"What is described by the seals is similar to the signs of the end of the age as described by Jesus in Matthew 24. There will be wars, famines and earthquakes (Mat 24:6-8), persecution (24:9-14), the heavenly bodies are shaken (Mat 24:29) and 'at that time the

sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn' (Mat 24:30). After the opening of the seven seals the scroll can be read and we find more detail, but this starts in chapter 8. The seven seals describe tribulation that is largely man made (wars, famine and persecution) but under the control of God, the seven trumpets are disasters sent by God with the aim of persuading man to repent, the seven bowls are the final outpouring of God's wrath on impenitent mankind. The fact that Christ opens the seven seals indicates his sovereignty over the future. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (Rev 22:13), he is sovereign from the beginning to the end of history, and everything in between."

"I heard that all in church, partner."

"Think about it, fellas. We had disease, we've had war and we're having a famine. Well, not us, but lots of people are hungry. I just said, there will be wars, famines and earthquakes (Mat 24:6-8), persecution (24:9-14), the heavenly bodies are shaken (Mat 24:29) and 'at that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn' (Mat 24:30)."

"We haven't had the earthquake, yet."

"That's my point, I think. That's the only thing I mentioned that hasn't happened, yet."

"Gar-ree, we already believe you, you convinced us last fall after you woke up. Everybody knows that sooner or later we'll have the Big One."

"Partner, maybe we'll have a 10.5 and half of California will fall off into the ocean."

"I saw the movie, can't happen. Biggest earthquake we've ever had was 9.5. That was the magnitude 9.5 Great Chilean Earthquake of 22May60, the strongest earthquake ever recorded. Its epicenter, off the coast of South Central Chile, generated one of the most destructive tsunamis of the 20th Century."

"How big was the one in Alaska in '64?"

"Oh, 9.2, but it lasted ~4 minutes. There have only been 7 earthquakes with a magnitude of 9 or greater."

"Where were you when that one happened, Gar-Bear?"

"Right here in the Antelope Valley. I was stationed at Eddie's Airplane Patch in '64. Where were you?"

"Blaine, Washington."

The Bird Flu – Chapter 14

"Clarence?"

"Birmingham, Alabama, probably in jail, was it a weekend?"

"Good Friday."

"Then I ended up in jail. That Sheriff finally told me to get outta town and sober up. I did both."

"I was never so lucky, no one wanted to hurt my feelings. Not until I met Ron, that is."

"I didn't give chit about your feelings; you either got sober or died your choice. I called it like it was. Took you long enough."

"Met you in October of '92 and finally got and stayed sober on January 1, 1999."

"Seven years? That's not bad, Gar-ree."

"Seven after I started trying, Clarence. That was preceded by I don't know how many years when I knew I wasn't no damned drunk."

"Gar-Bear, everyone has some cross to bear. You're no different than the rest of us. All three of us have something wrong with us, diabetes, bad heart or both. It was fun while it lasted, we told ourselves, but it wasn't fun and we're paying for it now."

"You're right, partner. Getting back to the future earthquake, Clarence lives too close to the fault. I can't imagine his house will survive when the shaking starts."

"Gar-ree, it might not happen for 50 years."

"Hogwash, I'm on page 135 and this is a short story."

"Uh?"

"I think what he's saying is he only has about 70 pages to wrap this up, Clarence."

"You're writing all of this down?"

"That's the easiest way to write a story, live it."

"Just be sure you spell my name right."

"In the story?"

"No on my tombstone."

"When it hits, don't go out into the street and make sure you don't get hit by any light poles. Crawl under a table."

"You'll come after me?"

"If the street isn't closed, I will."

"Why thank you, thank you kindly."

"No problem."

We shared a couple of more adventures (drunk stories), agreed to rescue each other when the earthquake came and called it a day. I had been busy for a while cutting and wrapping the meat. It came as primal cuts, those bags that contained a whole sirloin, beef round, etc. The pork was in boxes, butts, boneless loins, whole hams and 4 pound packages of bacon. The chicken was whole, packed in ice. It was what meat cutters usually saw when they bought boxed meat. While I had murdered the pork chops, Sharon and the girls packaged the chickens, bacon and so forth in Ziploc freezer bags.

My knives were sharp for a change and it didn't take long to cut the stuff into retail cuts and for them to bag it. I'd never seen bulk ground beef before and the label said it was 15%, ground chuck, I think. I hadn't expected processed meats like bacons and hams, but we had them although they weren't any brand I recognized. I like Cure 81 hams, Jimmy Dean sausage and Oscar Meyer hot dogs and bologna. The only thing I could tell was the chickens were Foster Farm, a good brand. That was the free meat; the stuff you could buy was all brand names with good ham running about \$6 a pound. Keep in mind that premium brands are sometimes transported across the country and that's probably why we didn't see many.

Somewhere in the middle of that was the US government arranging for food distribution, probably in un-refrigerated Army trucks. What we hadn't seen any of was highly processed foods, like Dinty Moore Stew, also a Hormel product like the Cure 81 hams. What fresh vegetables they had hadn't been fresh for some time. While we wouldn't have fresh salads in the winter months, we had our own vegetables from the garden.

The snow came and it was proving to be another bad winter. Had I been thinking, I'd have erected some kind of arch from the patio to the entrance to the shelter so I wouldn't have needed someone to shovel a path. This was the winter of '09-'10. We still didn't have any phones because they couldn't replace the switches. Frankly, I'm surprised they found enough transformers to restore electricity. In many ways, we had gone from a free country to what could only be described as a police state. The government providing for our needs, but where did they get the money to pay for that, we hadn't paid taxes in a long while.

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I began to suspect they'd nationalized everything; all it would take was a Presidential Order. Then, with 3' of snow on the ground, it began to shake. Late January, like Northridge. We knew it was coming and had for some time, but you can only get so ready for an earthquake. At first I thought I was reliving the Northridge quake, it didn't take long to get over that. This one was much stronger and lasted forever. I wasn't about to bolt out of the house in nothing but my drawers, not with 3' snow on the ground. You try to get dressed in the middle of something like that.

There was nothing in my bedroom to fall over on me except the glass closet doors. They rattled badly, but stayed in place. Finally, I managed to get my pants on and slid into one of my heavy shirts. The only shoes I could find were those Laredo boots that hurt my feet. I checked on Amy and the kids and they were trying to get dressed. Next, I checked on Sharon and she was riding it out in her recliner. It seemed to last forever, but it later turned out that it only lasted ~150 seconds.

It was stupid, but I couldn't walk in those boots and went looking for a pair of sneakers. My dresser drawer holding my socks was on the bed, it was easy to find heavy white socks. I put those on and found my sneakers. Grabbing coats and blankets, I collected the family and moved them out the front door. Normally, the back door would have been the better choice, but we had a patio cover and who knew if it would still be standing. Out the front door, the only hazard was the light pole across the street and it couldn't reach here.

I wasn't thinking of anything except getting the family out of the house before it collapsed on us. We couldn't see the sidewalk because all of the snow had caved in. I looked and Sharon was barefoot. We finished riding it out in that little alcove outside the front door. I stepped out in the snow and could see the house appeared to be skewed. The length of the house is nearly parallel with the Fault line.

"Get dressed. Do it quick, we'll get an aftershock that will do more damage than the quake. Let's try to get into the shelter."

All over the neighborhood, people were outside, mostly barefoot in their night clothes. I wasn't worried about a gas leak, Sharon had put in an earthquake valve maybe 15 years before. While she got dressed, I checked out back. The roof we had built over the patio outside the kitchen door held, the flimsy sunscreen that covered most of the patio hadn't. We had to find a way though that to get to the shelter. It had detached from the house and come down nearly intact, creating a barrier between us and the shelter.

"Dad, we can go out the side door of the garage and down the sidewalk. The cover doesn't extend that far," Amy suggested.

"Try it. See if you can get through the garage."

The door appeared to be jammed, but it was a good idea. Actually it was just locked, but no one thought to look.

"Outside. Go across the front of the house and down the sidewalk. Leave the gate open so people will know the way we went."

"Which gate?"

"Oh, I'd better open the front gate, so your brothers can get in."

I unlocked the front gate, leaving it closed. Next, I went into my office and retrieved my firearms that I kept topside. I helped Sharon, or she helped me, into the backyard. Amy was trying to clear away the snow from the shelter cover.

"Lower the winch."

"Sharon, this time, you're going to need to climb down. It's only 20', you can do it."

"Why?"

"Because I can't find the winch control"

"Here," Amy said handing me the control.

"Ok, get in the sling and I'll lower you."

After she was down, I lowered Amy and then the 2 kids, Audrey and Udell. Lastly, I lowered myself. It was hard hanging onto my guns and working the control, but maybe God had His hand on the control, I made it. The generator had kicked in and we had power. Heat was flowing, beginning to warm the shelter. That and the radio was squawking, "Gar-Bear, got your ears on?"

"I'm here, barely, go Ron."

"Son of a bitch, it was the Big One."

"If it wasn't, I rather skip that one. Have you heard from Clarence?"

"Negatory."

"What's your situation?"

"The house isn't down but it might not survive an aftershock. How are you, come back?"

"We're in the shelter. We're copasetic. Patio cover is down, light pole from across the street is down and I don't know about the house, we have jammed doors."

"Can you go after Clarence?"

"Negative, can you?"

"Don't know, I can try."

"Roger, keep me up to date."

They started to filter in, Derek and Mary and their four, Damon and his three, Lance, Elvia and their family, Dave, Dick, Chris, Patti and Daniel. I expected Ron has about 2 chances of getting to Clarence, Slim and None.

"Damn, Gary, I figured you were full of chit. You said to be prepared for an earthquake. How did you know?"

"Bad things happen in 3s. I eliminated all the things I figured couldn't happen and was left with the Big One."

"Did the last person in close the gate and lock it?"

"Not very neighborly."

"My shelter, my rules. I say who can and can't come in. I smell coffee, help yourselves. Chris, you know where the Earl Grey is."

"The door won't open."

"Earthquake latches, reach in and push up on the white thing."

"How far does this extend?"

"The earthquake? Who knows? The 1857 Fort Tejon earthquake extended from San Berdoo to Parkfield. Our section of the Fault didn't get as much disruption. You want a run down?"

o

Time: January 9, 1857 / about 8:20 am PST

Location: 35° 43' N, 120° 19' W about 72 km (45 miles) northeast of San Luis Obispo, about 120 km (75 miles) northwest of Bakersfield.

Magnitude: M_w 7.9 (approx.)

Type of faulting: right-lateral strike-slip

Fault ruptured: San Andreas

Length of surface rupture: about 360 km (225 miles)

Maximum surface offset: about 9 meters (30 feet)

The Fort Tejon earthquake of 1857 was one of the greatest earthquakes ever recorded in the US, and left an amazing surface rupture scar over 350 kilometers in length along the San Andreas fault. Yet, despite the immense scale of this quake, only two people were reported killed by the effects of the shock – a woman at Reed's Ranch near Fort Tejon was killed by the collapse of an adobe house, and an elderly man fell dead in a plaza in the Los Angeles area.

The fact that only two lives were lost was primarily due to the nature of the quake's setting; California in 1857 was sparsely populated, especially in the regions of strongest shaking, and this fact, along with good fortune, kept the loss of life to a minimum. The effects of the quake were quite dramatic, even frightening. Were the Fort Tejon shock to happen today, the damage would easily run into billions of dollars, and the loss of life would likely be substantial, as the present day communities of Wrightwood, Palmdale, Frazier Park, and Taft (among others) all lie upon or near the 1857 rupture area.

As a result of the shaking, the current of the Kern River was turned upstream, and water ran four feet deep over its banks. The waters of Tulare Lake were thrown upon its shores, stranding fish miles from the original lake bed. The waters of the Mokelumne River were thrown upon its banks, reportedly leaving the bed dry in places. The Los Angeles River was reportedly flung out of its bed, too. Cracks appeared in the ground near San Bernardino and in the San Gabriel Valley. Some of the artesian wells in Santa Clara Valley ceased to flow, and others increased in output. New springs were formed near Santa Barbara and San Fernando. Ridges (moletracks) several meters wide and over a meter high were formed in several places. In Ventura, the mission sustained considerable damage, and part of the church tower collapsed. At Fort Tejon, where shaking was greatest, damage was severe. All around southern and central California, the strong shaking caused by the 1857 shock was reported to have lasted for at least one minute, possibly two or three!

The surface rupture caused by the quake was extensive. The San Andreas fault broke the surface continuously for at least 350 km (220 miles), possibly as much as 400 km (250 miles), with an average slip of 4.5 meters (15 feet), and a maximum displacement of about 9 meters (30 feet) (possibly greater) in the Carrizo Plain area. Kerry Sieh (1978) noted that the Elkhorn Thrust, a low-angle thrust fault near the San Andreas, may have slipped simultaneously in the 1857 quake – an observation that a team of researchers (1996) have recently used to support the idea that future movements along the San Andreas fault zone might produce simultaneous rupture on thrust faults in and near the Los Angeles area, causing a terrible "double earthquake".

The location of the epicenter of the Fort Tejon earthquake is not known. As the name suggests, one idea is to locate it near the area of strongest reported shaking – Fort Tejon. However, because there is evidence that foreshocks to the 1857 earthquake may have occurred in the Parkfield area, it is located on this map near the northwestern end of the surface rupture, just southeast of Parkfield, near Cholame.

o

"Gar-Bear, come back."

"Go, Ron."

"I can't get there."

"Can you get here?"

"I think so."

"Someone will open the gate, call when you arrive."

"Rog, wilco, out."

"Waffles, anyone?" Sharon asked.

I'll be damned; Patti and she had been making waffles and keeping them warm in the oven. She hadn't said that until they had cooked enough for everyone. Usually, she fried bacon when nobody wanted it. She hadn't, they did.

Ron, Clarence and I were the Chevy Chase, Steve Martin and Martin Short of the real world. No doubt when Fleataxi hung that handle on us, he was just trying to be cute. However, it stuck. We clowned around most of the time and got serious when the situation called for it. It has been said that laughter is the best medicine (Reader's Digest). Clowning around beat the hell out of being morose over something we couldn't control. We could control our future, as far as drinking went, but we could never change the past.

Then we had the first aftershock, throwing most of us to the floor. I thought maybe I heard a crash, but I wasn't about to go outside and look. It only lasted a few seconds, but it was fairly strong. Earthquakes do that while they're trying to finish up what they started when they tried to reduce the strain. Over time, they'd fall off and so would many of the still standing buildings, weakened as they were by the earthquake itself. About 10 minutes later, Ron called.

"We're in your housing tract, open the gate."

"10-4. Derek, if you please?"

"What happened to your arm?"

"Must have strained it when I fell down on the way to your house."

"Derek, check it and make sure it isn't broken."

"Not broken, Dad, I'll need a triangular bandage to make him a sling."

"There's a bunch of them in the orange medical supply bag."

"Ronald, I believe you're going to lose weight, what with your right wing out of action."

"I can get by left handed. The wind came up some, the snow is blowing. I think maybe we got a blizzard."

"A Blizzard? Hogwash, the US Weather Service defines a blizzard as a storm with winds of more than 35 miles an hour and snow that limits visibility to 500 feet or less. A severe blizzard is defined as having winds exceeding 45 miles an hour, visibility of a quarter mile or less, and temperatures of 10° F or lower. Does this qualify?"

"Guess not."

"Gar-ree, can you hear me?"

"Clarence, is that you? I'm sorry, but I couldn't get there. Ron tried and he couldn't make it either. How are you doing?"

"Doing? Doing fine, here under my house. We're trapped, can you help?"

"Can we?" I asked. I got nods in return.

"We'll get there somehow, Clarence. Can you holdout?"

"Do I have a choice?"

"I guess not. Ron says the wind is blowing some. Has your home come down more with the aftershock?"

"That's what brought it down, Gar-ree, the aftershock. I told Shirley we shouldn't go back inside, but she wouldn't listen."

"Is she ok?"

"Mad as a wet hen over her house being dirty. No, she's ok."

"Hang on, we'll get there."

"Gary, you can't go."

"I promised Clarence I'd try. With everyone here to help, we'll get there. Besides, only Ron and I know where Clarence lives."

"You be careful."

"You know, this doesn't make much sense."

"What doesn't?"

"Clarence has a CM300 radio. It either runs as a mobile radio on 13.8v or from the power supply from 110v. He had that radio in the house, what is he running it on?"

"Who cares? Does it really matter how he got it going? I'll talk to him while the rest of you go after him," Ron responded.

We gathered what tools were available and headed out into the snow that almost up to the hood of the pickup. It was good Chris was driving, when we got stuck, he'd backup and ram the snow bank. We had 1 mile to go, it took at least 2 hours; we could have walked faster or maybe not.

"How's he doing?"

"His radio is getting weaker, he must be losing power. Are you any closer?"

"We've made it down 45th street to Avenue S (1 mile), it shouldn't be long now."

It was not far at all, but the streets were clogged by snow and debris. Chris said we should hoof it from here. Clarence's house wasn't normally visible from Avenue S, but I could see part of it rising above the rubble. Most of the houses were one story homes, Clarence had a two story; hence his pile of debris was just a bit higher than the remainder. There were two people alive in that pile? We'd had a second and third aftershock on the way down. As we worked our way closer, we got another, weaker aftershock. To the right another roof collapsed, causing me to nearly jump out of my sneakers. The only firearm we brought on this expedition was Lance's .357 magnum, it was a rescue mission, not a hunting trip.

"CLARENCE, CLARENCE, CAN YOU HEAR ME?"

"Over here," came a barely audible reply.

"He's over there." Dick said. I hadn't hear a thing. I'm more deaf than not, just one of the 100s of crosses I bear.

I stood back and watched, there wasn't anything I could do besides get in the way.

"Ron, we heard him, they're digging him out."

"What about Shirley?"

"He'll know where she was, they'll follow his lead."

"You're not helping?"

"I am. I'm staying out of the way, bad enough they have 2 to dig out."

It took maybe 20 minutes to remove enough rubble to get to Clarence. He didn't appear to be hurt. He had a portable radio in one hand and a bag containing his meds in the other. Clarence told them where Shirley had been and they got to her in an additional 10 minutes.

"Damn, it was paid for too," Clarence said looking at their collapsed house. "How did you make out?"

"Patio cover finished falling with the first aftershock. The house is standing, but may be leaning, it was kinda hard to tell."

"Where are you now, the shelter?"

"No, I'm at your house, Ron is in the shelter."

"You know what I meant."

"Yes I did, I just wanted to cheer you up. When did you get the hand held?"

"Got that a while back. Good thing, too; my radio is somewhere in that mess. I connected it through a BNC adapter to the outside antenna. That's probably why it reached your house. What took you so long?"

"Look around. We came from Avenue S on foot. It took us two hours to get from R to S."

"Look there, the wind turbine is still standing."

"Ron and his family walked from their house to ours, he said he thought we were having a blizzard. Must have got hit by a wind gust, you couldn't see that tower if we had a blizzard."

"Everybody ok?"

"All except Ron, he fell down and hurt his right arm."

The Bird Flu – Chapter 15

"Broken?"

"Derek said no."

"You got anything broken?"

"Don't think so. Shirley, you ok?"

"I'm ok, look at our home."

"We had earthquake insurance. You don't suppose..."

"Right. Disaster number 3 Clarence. I wouldn't count on it if I were you."

"These houses are supposed to be built to withstand earthquakes, Gar-ree."

"These houses are built so YOU can survive an earthquake Clarence. You did, so it worked. In building codes, the shaking-hazard maps are converted into seismic zone maps, which are used for seismic analysis of structural components of buildings. The seismic zone maps depict seismic hazards as zones of different risk levels. Such zones are typically designated as Seismic Zone 0, Seismic Zone 1, Seismic Zone 2 and so on. The seismic zone maps usually show the severity of expected earthquake shaking for a particular level of probability, such as the levels of shaking that have a 1-in-10 chance of being exceeded in a 50-year period. Buildings and other structures must be designed with adequate strength to withstand the effects of probable seismic ground motions within the Seismic Zone where the building or structure is being constructed."

"Make a simple statement, get a lecture."

"Sorry."

"Think we can rescue the food?"

"Where was it?"

"Most of it was stored in the garage. My guns should be ok, I had a gun safe."

"Chris, could you see if you can get into the garage? Clarence said most of their food was in there?"

"I think so; the garage is only partially collapsed."

"Where was your gun safe?"

"In the garage."

"Gary, we're going after the truck. It might take a while, see if you can get the food out of the garage."

"Clarence, you get your guns and ammo. We'll move the food out."

"I have a chest type freezer and it's full."

"How big is it?"

"About 15ft³. There are sheets of cardboard in there, we got a new mattress."

"Gary, this garage looks safe enough, we'll get the meat and the freezer," Dick said.

"Maybe we should leave the dry stuff for last; it won't get hurt much if the roof does collapse."

"You going to unload it?"

"No, we're going to put it on cardboard and slide it."

"Clarence, do you have a tarp?"

"In there on a shelf."

"Waterproof?"

"Yep."

"We'll put the dry goods on that."

"Jeezus, where did you find 100# bags of beans?"

"Albertson's, had to order them."

"When did you get them?"

"Before the war. We bought 10 bags."

"You bought half a ton of pinto beans?"

"Didn't you?"

"Not hardly. I bought 25 pound bags from Costco. We only had 15 bags."

"Before or after you built the shelter?"

"Before."

"After?"

"We had 20 bags of beans and 10 50-pound bags of jasmine rice."

"And now?"

"Now it's different, maybe 2 tons of beans and 3 tons of rice."

"You must like Chinese."

"As a matter of fact, we do. Damon salvaged most of that."

"Is there enough room in that shelter?"

"If not, we'll do like the Navy and hot bunk."

o

It took them about an hour to get the truck the ½ mile from Avenue S to Clarence's home. By then, most of the stuff was out of the house and covered with a second tarp. It had started to snow lightly. The other's manhandled the loaded freezer into the truck and we climbed on, mostly sitting atop of things. It probably took all of 10 minutes to get back to Moon Shadows now that the way was cleared. When we got to the housing tract, some of the women were there, at the entrance, and proceeded to hand out weapons.

"What's this for?"

"The other residents are restive. They're milling around outside and most of them are carrying those shotguns Damon made available."

"Who is watching the house?"

"Ron. We slapped on some Icy Hot and his arm is enough better for him to handle a firearm."

"Who is backing him up?"

"Mary, Aaron and Eric."

"What about the back patio, still cluttered?"

"Aaron used a chain saw and cut up the sun shade. It's mostly clear."

"You're wearing a gun, be still my heart!"

"I didn't like the looks of those people. Mary gave me one of your M1910s."

"M1911."

"Anyway, she said it's cocked and locked."

"Do you know what that means?"

"Push down here and pull the trigger?"

"Ron, Gary. Standby to open the car gate."

Click, click.

"Ok, everybody off. Lock and load."

◦

"Load and lock" was the original order, and referred to the operation of the M1 Garand rifle, the standard US Army rifle of WW II. The phrase describes the insertion of a clip of ammunition into the rifle, loading the clip, and locking the bolt forward (which forces a round into the chamber, readying the rifle for use).

"Lock and load" has a more general meaning now, warning people to get ready for action. It was immortalized by John Wayne in 1949's *Sands of Iwo Jima*, where the Duke used this reversed phrase both in combat and as a humorous metaphor for becoming intoxicated.

One can also understand "lock and load" as a meaningful instruction with the M1, as described in the manual: before loading the clip, the proper procedure is to lock back the bolt using the operating rod. Note that on page 21 of manual the procedure for preparing the M1 Garand for firing is to "pull the operating rod handle to the rear until the bolt is securely LOCKED open". Then you load the clip. This indicates that first lock and then load is indeed the order of inserting a cartridge clip into the M1.

As applied to a more modern weapon like the M1A or the M16, it could refer to locking a magazine in place and chambering a round of ammunition. It is also the name of a shooting range in or near Tyler, Texas or an Album by Denis Leary or a deriding reference to John Ashcroft.

When my M1A rifle was new, if you didn't pull back on the operating rod hard enough, it would load the rifle but not lock the bolt in place, suggesting perhaps, a weak operating rod spring or a weak operator, me.

o

"We don't want no trouble."

"Then, don't start any."

"How come you have a shelter in your backyard?"

"Because I had one built."

"Why won't you let us into your shelter?"

"First and foremost, it's my shelter and I say who does and does not get to enter. Second and finally, it's full."

"I don't know as we like that."

"I don't care."

"How come your letting a ni..."

"I wouldn't finish that remark, if I were you. Clarence is my Amigo. He's always welcome in my shelter. You, on the other hand, may just be occupying the house we intend to give to Clarence and Shirley."

"That's my house, no way that's going to happen."

"It is not your house, you're just occupying it."

"Possession is 9 points of the law."

"Do you know what the 10th point is?"

"No, what is it?"

"A bullet. It overrules the other 9 points."

"You wouldn't dare!"

"Are you daring me?"

"Mister, I wouldn't dare him, if I were you, he's funny that way. He'd eat arsenic on a dare."

"I dare you to eat arsenic."

"One thing at a time."

BLAM!!!

"Anyone else?"

"You just murdered him."

"Self-defense, he dared me to eat arsenic. What if I didn't know arsenic was a poison? Which house did he used to live in?"

o

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to, than I have ever known. – Charles Dickens (A Tale of Two Cities)

Have I read it? Yes, I have. I even read *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo, in French, or tried to. *And so it has been, and so it is written on the doorway to paradise, that those who falter and those who fall must pay the price.* My favorite version of the movie was the 1952 version with Michael Rennie and released the year after, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*.

"I'm sorry, but he just pissed me off."

"Fixed the rifle?"

"New operating rod spring."

"Where...?"

"Fulton Armory. I bought a complete GI spring kit."

"I always figured you'd buy a GI flashhider with the bayonet lug."

"Derek says that if you get close enough to use a bayonet, you're too close."

"Yes I do," Derek chimed in. "You'd better believe it, too."

"Besides, you can't use a bayonet with the improved flashhider."

"But, when you shot the guy..."

"I know, but I don't leave it on the rifle and Sharon didn't add it. Did they move out yet?"

"There are about 8 empty houses, now. Clarence can take his pick."

"Like rats deserting a sinking ship?"

"Maybe. Or, maybe they didn't want to risk pissing you off."

"This two story seems sound Clarence."

"It doesn't have a front fence."

"None of them do. We can have Damon look around and find blocks. Then we'll find someone to lay them. Maybe we'll get lucky and find a wrought iron gate."

"Did you check your house? Is it square?"

"Rectangular. But, yes, I checked it and it's not tilted like I originally thought. Only door that jammed was the door to the garage and that was because it was locked and nobody checked. Garage door goes up and down just fine."

"The furniture in that house is, well, worn out."

"Did you check the other 7 empty houses?"

"Not yet, Gar-ree."

"Want me to go with you? I'll bring my rifle."

"What for?"

"In case anyone objects."

"I've never seen this side of you."

"As I've said before, he pissed me off. I was tired and hungry and pretty well mad at the world. He just picked the wrong time to say what he said. I guess it answered some questions I had about myself too."

"Like?"

"Could I pull the trigger on anyone, again?"

"You did do that. Got him right in the belly button, must have hurt, before he died."

"He probably didn't even feel the bullet. It cut his spine."

"Left a big exit hole, too."

"Full metal jacket. Some of the South African surplus I bought."

"Are you ok?"

"Why?"

"You're shaking."

"I am?"

"You are."

"Oh, oh. I'll be right back."

"What's wrong?"

"Low blood sugar, hypoglycemia. I get the shakes when that happens."

"Always?"

"Not always, no, darn it. When I do, it means hypoglycemia."

"There, I'm, better, I had some glucose tablets and got a coke."

"What causes that?"

"I don't eat right. One time I ended up in the hospital and by the time they got around to seeing me in the ER, my blood sugar was 400."

"They keep you?"

"They didn't have room, so they sent me home."

"Any other way to tell?"

"If you talk to me and I look like I'm trying to answer, but can't talk, get me a coke and ask Sharon to fix me a peanut butter sandwich."

"It must be fun living with you."

"Not really. They tend to ignore me a lot because I drive them nuts worrying about me."

"What about back after you got shot?"

"That was far easier, I didn't do anything. They put the food in front of me, according to my menu and told me when to go to bed. Then one day I decided to take a shower and I snapped out of it."

"You have anything special to take?"

"Glucose tablets let me give you a bottle."

o

"Mind if I ask you a question, Gar-Bear?"

"Shoot."

"Did we have the disasters because we were prepared or were we prepared because we expected the disasters?"

"Which came first, the chicken or the egg? It's not as hard to answer your question as it is to figure out the chicken/egg question, Ronald. In fact, it's downright simple. People haven't changed since mankind became civilized. We've had wars for at least 5,000 years, the beginning of recorded history. It could be over land or resources, but we've always had war. Earthquakes are recorded as far back as ancient China, they're a natural process of the Earth adjusting. Things like the bird flu, are slightly different and still the same. No matter how far we come in preventing illness, bacteria and viruses mutate and sometimes, our cures no longer work. When we first came up with a vaccine for the Bird Flu, it didn't work as well as expected. They expected at least a 55% or higher rate of success, but only realized a 45% rate of success.

"In modern times, we invented more powerful weapons, capable of destroying the entire planet. Did that stop us from accumulating them? Hell no. The Russians had 11,000 and we had 10,000, overkill on top of overkill. We made Treaties, but they didn't last, they never do. We knew about the Bird Flu as far back as what, 2003? And how long has California been waiting for the Big One? One of these days, the locked portion of the Cascadian Subduction Zone will let loose and then, look out! The Cascade Range is a result of that subduction zone, so when it goes, the volcanoes could erupt, again.

"The most seismically active portion of the US is Alaska. Activity in Alaska has been recorded in Yellowstone. Wouldn't it be lovely if that let loose again with another Super-volcano? What about that Resurgent Dome they have in Long Valley? They've had trees dying because of CO₂ gas leaking from Long Valley's magma for years. The day

of the earthquake, you thought we were having a blizzard. So, you tell me, did our preparations cause any of that to happen?"

"No, I guess not."

"What did our preparations do for us?"

"It kept our bellies filled, kept the lights on, and provided us with basic protection."

"Any more questions?"

"How did you know when the Big One would happen?"

"I didn't. Just because I believe that bad things happen in 3s, doesn't mean it had to be the earthquake. It could have been any major local disaster, a regional disaster or a national disaster. This one turned out to be a regional disaster. The Bird Flu and the Third World War were more on the order of World disasters. God gave the world a break and this disaster was regional. That doesn't mean there aren't people starving to death in Africa, of course. That too, would be more regional in character.

"Along the Earth's plate boundaries, such as the San Andreas fault, segments exist where no large earthquakes have occurred for long intervals of time. Scientists term these segments 'seismic gaps' and, in general, have been successful in forecasting the time when some of the seismic gaps will produce large earthquakes. Geologic studies show that over the past 1,400 to 1,500 years large earthquakes have occurred at about 150-year intervals on the southern San Andreas Fault. As the last large earthquake on the southern San Andreas occurred in 1857, that section of the fault is considered a likely location for an earthquake within the next few decades. The San Francisco Bay area has a slightly lower potential for a great earthquake, as less than 100 years have passed since the great 1906 earthquake; however, moderate-sized, potentially damaging earthquakes could occur in this area at any time.

"A great earthquake very possibly will not occur unannounced. Such an earthquake may be preceded by an increase in seismicity for several years, possibly including several foreshocks of about magnitude 5 along the fault. Before the next large earthquake, seismologists also expect to record changes in the Earth's surface, such as a shortening of survey lines across the fault, changes in elevation, and effects on strain meters in wells. A key area for research on methods of earthquake prediction is the section of the San Andreas Fault near Parkfield in central California, where a moderate-size earthquake has occurred on the average of every 20-22 years for about the last 100 years. Since the last sizeable earthquake occurred in 1966, Parkfield has a high probability for a magnitude 5-6 earthquake before the end of this century and possibly one may occur within a few years of 1988. The US Geological Survey has placed an array of instruments in the Parkfield area and is carefully studying the data being collected; attempting to learn what changes might precede an earthquake of about that size. "

The Bird Flu – Chapter 16

"Like New Orleans, huh?"

"New Orleans didn't have to be a disaster, Ron. It was a combination of state and local political corruption combined with a Congress that refused to fund the necessary repairs and upgrades to the levee system. There are so many fingers to point on that one, you'd need 3 hands. On top of that, we were in the age instant news. Of all the people to blame for what happened in New Orleans, probably the least culpable was Michael D. Brown, the scapegoat."

"How can you say that?"

"If the people had been evacuated, as they should have been, it wouldn't have mattered. Although the US Army Corps of Engineers made mistakes, the local and state political corruption had a lot to do with the failed levee system."

"And now this?"

"You're referring to the earthquake? My house and your house are still standing. Clarence has a place to live and some fairly nice furniture to go with it. It will warm up soon and the snow will melt off. Then we'll see what we can do about razing Clarence's collapsed house. Nobody should build that close to an earthquake fault anyway."

"Has he gotten all of his stuff?"

"They recovered all that they could. They have their mementos, clothes, and anything that the earthquake didn't destroy. Most importantly, they lived through it. Imagine what it might have been like if their house had caught fire and burned to the ground."

"I talked to the contractor, he said it would be 2-3 months before they could start on our place and we can't get an occupancy certificate until he's done."

"Why don't you move into one of those empty houses?"

"Clarence got the best of the lot. There's one that we might be able to get clean enough to live in with about a month's work."

"Filthy?"

"The city dump is cleaner. The one I have in mind doesn't have holes in the walls or anything. If we emptied it out, scrubbed it, applied a coat of paint and replaced the flooring, we could get by."

"Two story?"

"Yep."

"Is wheat color carpet ok?"

"Why?"

"Damon said he saw a full roll of wheat colored carpeting in Lancaster."

"Good carpet or junk?"

"Above midline, but not the top of the line."

"Can he go get it?"

"He already did. Plus he got padding and those nail strips. About all we need is a carpet layer."

"One of those refugees that stayed said he used to be a carpet layer."

"I've avoiding getting to know them, Ron. Never know when I might have to shoot another one for pissing me off."

"Have you thought about therapy?"

"Yeah, but bullets are cheaper."

"What's gotten into you?"

"I think they call it a backbone. I'm working on a Master's in assertiveness."

"Why?"

"Limited ammo."

"Gar-ree, how's it going? Ron, good to see you."

"How do you like the house, Clarence?"

"Better since we got on the coat of paint. Nice thing about that Navajo White is it goes with most everything."

"You have any paint left over Clarence?"

"Only about 50 gallons, Ron. Why?"

"We picked the house across the street from you. It needs cleaning, a coat of paint and carpet and we're going to live there until our house is ready to occupy."

"I have plenty of leftover concrete blocks too. Damon brought me 3 semi loads."

"What about the wrought iron gate?"

"He found one at a collapsed home and got it and the power unit. He said there were several available."

"Did you get your generator and propane moved?"

"Yeah, it's all wired in and we have power. Any idea when we're going to get back water?"

"Maybe next week, they're repairing a couple of mains on Avenue R."

"Why did they do the sewer first?"

"To prevent sewage from leaking into the water lines. With little water pressure, there was a danger."

"How did we manage to get by in the shelter so long?"

"I can answer that, Clarence; I had an oversize waste water tank and water conserving toilets. For liquid waste, you flush once and only use 0.8 gallons of water, for solid waste, you push the second button and use another 0.8 gallons, a total of 1.6 gallons. I looked at the 1.4 gallon bladder assisted toilets, but didn't get one. Because of the limited size of our water tank, that really helped."

"What size was that tank?"

"I seem to have a thing for 5,000. I had 5,000 gallons each water, waste water and diesel tanks."

"But not that much propane?"

"I had 24 5-gallon bottles and later added a 550-gallon tank holding 500 gallons. The next time I mentioned it in this tale, it was an accomplished fact and the tank was full. So were the bottles, we could cook steaks for years."

"How much propane do 24 bottles hold?"

"4.5 times 24 or 108 gallons, but I have several 25 gallon bottles too."

"And how much did you used to use for your gas grill?"

"About 2 bottles a year. However, before we got the tank, all we had to run the 2 stoves, dryer, furnace and hot water heater were those 24 bottles. If we'd have had some of those big bottles, like my aunt had back in the '50s, it might have been different."

"What size were they?"

"I think they were either 80 or 100 pound bottles."

"How many did she have?"

"I think she had two, can't really remember. Only used bottled gas on her stove."

"If we had a phone, you could call her and ask."

"I don't think so; she died when I was in the Air Force. She had cancer and was young, about 40."

"Those are large tanks, were they expensive?"

"Not really, they're plastic or PVC."

"Maybe I should get some of those too."

"For which house Ron, your old one or the one you're going to live in for the next few months?"

"The old one. The pool is badly cracked, they're going to have to pull it. Might be a good time to put in a shelter with water and black water tanks."

"Nice, but is that practical? You have a propane generator. I clearly remember you telling me I'd need 10,000 gallons of propane and asking me if I knew how large the tank was."

"I did, didn't I? Well, we can't afford another generator and the one we have is only well broken in. Anyone refill that propane tank they put out there to feed your housing tract?"

"Un-uh. It was close to empty when they finally get the gas back. I'm just surprised no one picked it up, why?"

"Do you know the capacity of that tank?"

"Why ask me, you're the propane expert."

"That happens to be a 10,000 gallon tank. How long has it been sitting there empty?"

"Months."

"Kind of an eyesore, isn't it?"

"If you're planning on stealing it, just do it, don't waste your time making excuses."

"You don't care?"

"I use diesel and now have my own 550 gallon propane tank, desert fill, of course."

"I'll have them bring you a second tank and give the other 2 to Clarence."

"Right, you only rented the tanks from AmeriGas. I don't want to rent 2 tanks."

"I only rented the first tank. I told you I got the rest from my friend at AmeriGas, I didn't say how or that I rented them."

"Will they be full or empty?"

"I'll have them moved here empty and see to it that they get filled, no charge to you or Clarence."

"I sometimes wonder if Clarence is a crooked as you and I are."

"You haven't taken much, you've always paid or had Damon do it."

"Yeah, but. I was a tax auditor for 20 years. The rule of thumb is you set a thief to catch a thief. Maybe I don't steal in the sense you mean, but I'll bet most of the taxpayers wouldn't agree."

"How did you do that anyway?"

"You look at a prune or raisin and it's sort of dried up and wrinkled, right? You know it started out to be a grape or a plum, but it isn't that now. It has its own aura. I can't explain it, you just know. Once you see the prune, you look further and if you're as clever as they thought they were, you'll always find it. Bury that tank deep, and then they can't find it from a chopper."

And that was how Clarence and I each ended up with 1,000 gallons of propane in tanks.

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"Now what?"

"What do you mean?"

"We, and our families, survived the earthquake. It was the third disaster. Either that's it or according to you, we'll have 6 more."

"We haven't finished cleaning up from the second and third, yet. The good news is that I still have quite a bit of left over fuel from when they turned the gas and lights back on. I had to keep it stabilized, so I might just as well use it. Besides, it will be a month or more before they start on your house and shelter. Lance immediately increased the security after the earthquake and we haven't made much trouble yet, but like Bob Dylan said, *the times, they are a changing*."

"How do you remember all of the old songs?"

"When we had an internet, I used to listen to them. Someone posted a website on 1 of 2 survival oriented websites I used to visit. It was the good music of my youth. When I needed a lyric for a story, I surfed."

"I never had anyone ask me, what did you do in the war daddy. If I had, I'd have had to tell them nothing."

"What was the most scared you ever were?"

"That the easy part, when Kennedy told us on the radio we were at DEFCON 3 at the start of the Cuban Missile Crisis. They ended up having SAC at DEFCON 2."

"Edwards isn't a SAC base."

"No, it isn't. We had 12 B-47s on the flight line, each carrying 2 nuclear weapons and the aircrews in trailers, right next to the planes. I could see those planes from my barracks window. I was terrified; because that's the closest in my life we ever got to a nuclear war without having one. I was only 19 years old and didn't expect to see 20. In 1962, most of our senior Noncoms had fought in WW II or Korea or both. They weren't exactly what you'd call reassuring. They expressed their concern in different ways, but I think they were scared too."

"Have we ever been at DEFCON 1?"

"That's a stupid question, of course we have, when we had WW III. You launch from DEFCON 1. EMERGCONs are national level reactions in response to ICBM (missiles in the air) attack. By definition, other forces go to DEFCON 1 during an EMERGCON. Do you know who was Chief of Staff of the Air Force on 22Oct62? Bombs Away LeMay."

"I'll ask one more time Gar-Bear, now what?"

"I'd say that, first, we don't let them move any more pansy's into the housing tract. Second, we help Damon and make sure we aren't short of anything we may need, be it food, fuel or ammo. Third, and finally, we keep the bad guys out."

"Gar-ree, who is the President?"

"Dubya's term ended on 20Jan09. When he suspended elections, it was unconstitutional. If I know the Constitution, the President is whomever Congress says it is. The 20th Amendment, section 3. *If, at the time fixed for the beginning of the term of the President, the President elect shall have died, the Vice President elect shall become President. If a President shall not have been chosen before the time fixed for the beginning of his term, or if the President elect shall have failed to qualify, then the Vice President elect shall act as President until a President shall have qualified; and the Congress may by law provide for the case wherein neither a President elect nor a Vice President elect shall have qualified, declaring who shall then act as President, or the manner in which one who is to act shall be selected, and such person shall act accordingly until a President or Vice President shall have qualified.*"

"Fine, so who is President?"

"Someone asked that question on Jericho and the answer was, 'Which one, there are six?' Hell, I don't know and I'm not sure I care. None of them have been worth shooting in a very long time. When Bill Clinton said, 'I didn't not have sex with that woman', he was probably referring to Hillary. Dubya became a Methodist when he got married, but he didn't act like any Methodist I ever knew. I planned to vote for Mitt because Glenn Beck wasn't running."

"A Mormon?"

"Why not? Ezra Taft Benson became a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1943 and didn't become Secretary of Agriculture until 1953. He did so without relinquishing his position on the Quorum. He later served as the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from '85 until '94, when he died. We've had dozens, if not hundreds, of Mormons who held a high political office."

"Why would you have voted for Glenn Beck?"

"He is one of us. I'd have voted for Harold Hughes for President and he was a Democrat, but only because he was one of us."

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"Are you up to pulling guard duty?"

"Gee, Lance, I don't know. If you put The Three Amigos on the same shift and in the same location, I'd say yes in a heartbeat."

"Consider it done."

"In that case, yes. Where?"

"How about the entrance?"

"I was going to say not the east wall. The entrance is fine; it will be a power trip."

"What do you mean?"

"Three old farts with guns controlling who does and doesn't get into the tract? Raw power at its finest."

"Absolute power..."

"Corrupts absolutely. Saw the movie with Clint Eastwood and Gene Hackman and know who said it, Lord Acton, a British historian of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.*"

"You start tomorrow, 4pm to midnight shift."

Some of Lord Acton famous quotes:

- "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely."
- "There is not a soul who does not have to beg alms of another, either a smile, a handshake, or a fond eye."
- "The one pervading evil of democracy is the tyranny of the majority, or rather of that party, not always the majority, that succeeds, by force or fraud, in carrying elections."
- "Be not content with the best book; seek sidelights from the others; have no favorites."
- "(History is) not a burden on the memory but an illumination of the soul."
- "And remember, where you have a concentration of power in a few hands, all too frequently men with the mentality of gangsters get control. History has proven that. All power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely."

In a letter he wrote to Robert E. Lee, he said, "Without presuming to decide the purely legal question, on which it seems evident to me from Madison's and Hamilton's papers that the Fathers of the Constitution were not agreed, I saw in State Rights the only availing check upon the absolutism of the sovereign will, and secession filled me with hope, not as the destruction but as the redemption of Democracy. The institutions of your Republic have not exercised on the old world the salutary and liberating influence which ought to have belonged to them, by reason of those defects and abuses of principle which the Confederate Constitution was expressly and wisely calculated to remedy. I believed that the example of that great Reform would have blessed all the races of mankind by establishing true freedom purged of the native dangers and disorders of Republics. Therefore I deemed that you were fighting the battles of our liberty, our progress, and our civilization; and I mourn for the stake which was lost at Richmond more deeply than I rejoice over that which was saved at Waterloo."

Did I just hear a Rebel yell? I think everyone likes Robert E. Lee, a West Point graduate and Superintendent of the Academy from 1852-1855. After his death in 1870, Lee became more admired and by the turn of the century, he was an All American hero.

"Among white Southerners, Lee came to be even more revered after his surrender than he had been during the war (when Stonewall Jackson had been the great Confederate hero, particularly after Jackson's death at Chancellorsville). Admirers pointed to his character and devotion to duty, not to mention his brilliant tactical successes in battle after battle against a stronger foe. Military historians continue to pay attention to his battlefield tactics and maneuvering, though many think he should have designed better strategic plans for the Confederacy. His reputation continued to build and by 1900 his cult had spread into the North, signaling a national apotheosis."

"Why not the 8 am to 4pm shift?"

"I guess someone already had it."

"What does apotheosis mean?"

"Elevation to a preeminent or transcendent position; glorification; although the most common definition is the elevation or exaltation of a person to the rank of a god."

"How do you know?"

"I looked it up."

"There is only One God."

"That's not what God said. He said, 'you shall have no other gods before Me.' The typical Protestant view enjoins that God must be known and acknowledged to be the only true God, and our God; and, to worship Him and to make Him known as He has been made known to us. Forbids not worshiping and glorifying the true God as God, and as our God; and forbids giving worship and glory to any other, which is due to Him alone."

"Is Methodist Protestant?"

"I sometimes think some people wonder about that. I'm merely raising issues, not saying that I agree with them. Islam has 10 Commandments, too. They say:

1. "There is no other god beside God."(47:19)
2. "My Lord, make this a peaceful land, and protect me and my children from worshipping idols." (14:35)
3. "Do not subject God's name to your casual swearing, that you may appear righteous, pious, or to attain credibility among the people." (2:224)
4. "O you who believe, when the Congregational Prayer (Salat Al-Jumu`ah) is announced on Friday, you shall hasten to the commemoration of GOD, and drop all business." (62:9)

The Sabbath was relinquished with the revelation of the Quran. Muslims are told in the Quran that the Sabbath was only decreed for the Jews. (16:124) God, however, ordered Muslims to make every effort and drop all businesses to attend the congregational (Friday) prayer. The Submitters may tend to their business during the rest of the day.

5. "...and your parents shall be honored. As long as one or both of them live, you shall never say to them, "Uff" (the slightest gesture of annoyance), nor shall you shout at them; you shall treat them amicably." (17:23)

6. "...anyone who murders any person who had not committed murder or horrendous crimes, it shall be as if he murdered all the people." (5:32)

7. "You shall not commit adultery; it is a gross sin, and an evil behavior." (17:32)

8. "The thief, male or female, you shall mark their hands as a punishment for their crime, and to serve as an example from God. God is Almighty, Most Wise." (5:38 - 39)

9. "Do not withhold any testimony by concealing what you had witnessed. Anyone who withholds a testimony is sinful at heart." (2:283)

10. "And do not covet what we bestowed upon any other people. Such are temporary ornaments of this life, whereby we put them to the test. What your Lord provides for you is far better, and everlasting." (20:131)

"Sometimes, I think your God is named Wiki."

"Really? How about Yahweh Elohim? His name is Lord and His title is God."

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches the continued practice of keeping the Ten Commandments as listed in KJV Exodus 20:2-17, including the following connotations:

- All mankind are the children of God and rightful beneficiaries of God's blessings through freely chosen obedience to the commandments.
- God should come first in our lives as the center of our worship, trust and gratitude.
- Work is a blessing. The commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy brings many attendant blessings of the fruitfulness of the earth. A whole nation or community can be blessed with fruitfulness as its people choose to keep these commandments, as promised in many passages in Deuteronomy. Work allows for growth, joy and progress through trials of faith. (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 2:11) Closely related blessings are available to communities that practice the law of the fast (see Isaiah 58:6-14) through using donated monies or commodities to help the poor and needy.
- Parents have a primary, divinely given obligation to teach their children the Ten Commandments in a loving, non-controlling way (Deuteronomy 6:5-7). Children should continue to honor their aging family members through attentive care, where possible.

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- The mainstream LDS Church teaches that communities and governments that foster or allow the general practice of abortion are violating the spirit of the sixth commandment, and thus diminish personal peace and prosperity. The same effect applies to violation of the seventh commandment, which are viewed as including pornography and pre-marital sexual relations.
- Personal, business/contractual and governmental integrity are vital to the strength of communities and nations, as implied in the eighth and ninth commandments.
- The LDS Church teaches that the blessings of freedom promised in Deuteronomy are available to whole nations as their people choose to follow the teachings of the Ten Commandments. While the separation of church and state is an important protection of the United States Constitution, "governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; ... for the good and safety of society..., such laws...framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life." (Doctrine and Covenants 134:1,2)
- An important proclamation teaching God-given roles of parents and families relating to the Ten Commandments was announced publicly by LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley in September 1995, entitled 'The Family: A Proclamation to the World'.

"What I find interesting is how Muslims seem to be able to justify terrorism even though the victim of terrorism hasn't murdered anyone or committed any horrendous crimes. They must have some rationalization to cover that."

"What do you intend to do if a raghead shows up at the entrance?"

"Shoot them and let God sort them out."

"I've heard you say something similar before."

"It's an expression I picked up from a friend, Fleataxi."

"You do know that you're going to Hell don't you?"

"Yeah, that happened when I shot the guy who pissed me off. God wouldn't let Moses into Heaven because he murdered an Egyptian guard. Maybe Moses can teach me stone carving."

"The Tablets were written by the Hand of God."

"How do you know, were you there? Could be, you're older than me. I've imagined Walter Cronkite narrating this story and finishing up with, *What sort of day was it? A day like all days, filled with those events that alter and illuminate our times... and you were there.* That would be fitting, if not a little ludicrous."

"Walter Cronkite from CBS? The Communist Broadcasting System? I really doubt that. No, he never expressed his personal opinion in his newscasts. I heard him say that when he was on Larry King; in a pig's eye, Gar-Bear!"

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Now, let's go back to the question of who is President. While I gave the correct legal answer, there is a problem with that answer. The President's terms ends, in this case, at noon on 20Jan09. All of the members of the House terms end at noon on 03Jan09. The mechanism for filling those seats falls on the individual state Governors. In addition, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the entire Senators' terms end at the same date and time as the House. In addition, it is reasonable to presume that some of the Governors won't be in office to appoint new members of the House and Senate. Don't you just love it when a plan comes together? Hannibal does. Thus, "Who is President", could easily be answered, "Which one, there are six." The size of the electoral college has been set at 538 since the election of 1964. Each state is allocated as many electors as it has Representatives and Senators in the US Congress. The District of Columbia has 3.

The reason issues like this keep coming up is my short attention span. You'll get a little here, a little later, etc. I knew I was going to Hell the second I pulled the trigger, but you'll notice, it didn't stop me. It's a shame (NOT!) all those folks moved out isn't it? However, ever since my health went back in '03, my fuse has been a bit on the short side. Then, when I gave up my driver's license that year, and became home bound, I may have resented having to depend on others to get around and do things. I didn't regret it, it got so I hated to ride with me; it was time.

So here we are on the swing shift, guarding the front entrance. Naturally, I'm equipped with my M1A and .45. I'm totally legal here, the 20 round rifle magazines are in my chest harness, not displayed, and I only have 8 round magazines for the pistol in the pouches, not in the pistol. The pistol magazines look the same, either way. With a new curfew in effect almost immediately, we didn't really expect any company after dark. What's that expression? Wait, I've got it, wish in one hand and chit in the other and see which one fills the fastest. Or, was that supposed to be spit? Either way, wishes don't weigh much and aren't large in volume, regardless of their size. To illustrate: I can wish it was me that found the Ship of Gold (SS Central America) all I want but my hand doesn't fill with gold, even though it was California Gold.

With a curfew in effect, nobody is supposed to be out and about except State Military Reserve, National Guard and the Sheriff's Department. Those of us on duty in the Moon Shadows housing tract aren't out and about; we're standing guard, just in case someone ignores the curfew. We are members of the Homeowners Association even though we didn't know we had one. Lance organized it as a fiction for the Sheriff to allow us to guard the housing tract, or so I've been told.

The Three Amigos, one permanently displaced, one temporarily displaced and one totally depressed. Say, depressed doesn't mean the same thing as displaced, does it? I

didn't think so. I wasn't displaced, it was more like I wasn't at my place, at the moment. If I was at my place, I'd be in front of my computer typing because we won't have TV in a very long time. I took my evening meds, the ones that put me to sleep, at 10pm and by 1am, I'm ready for bed.

It was a cool, if not downright cold, night. I had one of my heavy shirts on underneath, topped with my Tac-Force chest harness, topped with my navy blue NRA Life-Patron Member jacket. I was wearing a pair of those brown cotton jersey gloves to keep my hands warm. Plus, we had plenty of coffee to help us stay awake and give us an excuse to go home to use the bathroom. Which we have to do anyway because we take those water pills (like Dyazide, e.g. hydrochlorothiazide w/triamterene) to keep our blood pressure down.

"Quiet evening."

"Is that a nice way of saying you're bored, Ronald?"

"Nah, I'm just counting the numbers of cars going by."

"What are you up to?"

"Zero, not counting the State Military Reserve, National Guard and Sheriff's vehicles."

"How many of those did you count?"

"None. I'm sorry was I supposed to count them? A bunch of each went by, but I just smiled and waved."

"I suppose not. Was it enough so we should feel protected?"

"Jeez, I don't know. They average about one every 15 minutes."

"So do you feel safe?"

"I do as long as you keep your finger off the trigger of that rifle of yours."

"No sweat, I'm at condition 1."

"Huh?"

"Ron, he has the safety on. He's cocked and locked."

"Oh. Ok."

"My pistol is in condition 2, Ron. That means round in the chamber, hammer down. To the best of my knowledge, there is no way to have a live round in the chamber of a M1A without the rifle being cocked."

"How do you uncock the rifle?"

"Pull the trigger."

"I mean safely?"

"Pull the trigger. On an empty chamber, idiot."

"That's it? No other way?"

"If you find one, let me know."

"Can't you depress the trigger when you slide the action forward?"

"Sure can, but the rifle is still cocked."

"Sheriff's car, smile."

"Why?"

"Why what?"

"Why smile?"

"So they don't arrest you for having a loaded gun inside the city limits."

"Excuse me? What good would it do to have an unload gun? I know, tell the bad guys to wait until I put in a magazine and cycle the action? Right? You know what; you're starting to piss me off."

"WAIT. Don't smile if you don't want to. Just don't get pissed off."

"Gar-ree, quit teasing Ron, I'm beginning to believe that he thinks you're serious."

"Really? Sorry Ron, I'm not really crazy, I just act that way."

"Why?"

"Keeps 'em guessing."

"That's starting to piss me off."

"Don't let it; my rifle is in condition 1."

"What's it take to put it in condition 0?"

"Push forward right here. Did you hear the click, condition 0. Did you hear the second click, condition 1."

"Well fine, don't play with it."

"Gar-ree, who's on first?"

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That did it. I could never maintain a straight face when Clarence dug out the old Abbott and Costello routine. I also like the other version, too. I finally found it in *Big John*.

George: Condi! Nice to see you. What's happening?

Condi: Sir, I have the report here about the new leader of China.

George: Great. Lay it on me.

Condi: Hu is the new leader of China.

George: That's what I want to know.

Condi: That's what I'm telling you.

George: That's what I'm asking you. Who is the new leader of China?

Condi: Yes.

George: I mean the fellow's name.

Condi: Hu.

George: The guy in China.

Condi: Hu.

George: The new leader of China.

Condi: Hu.

George: The Chinaman!

Condi: Hu is leading China.

George: Now whaddya' asking me for?

Condi: I'm telling you Hu is leading China.

George: Well, I'm asking you. Who is leading China?

Condi: That's the man's name.

George: That's who's name?

Condi: Yes.

George: Will you or will you not tell me the name of the new leader of China?

Condi: Yes, sir.

George: Yassir? Yassir Arafat is in China? I thought he was in the Middle East.

Condi: That's correct.

George: Then who is in China?

Condi: Yes, sir.

George: Yassir is in China?

Condi: No, sir.

George: *Then who is?*
 Condi: *Yes, sir.*
 George: *Yassir?*
 Condi: *No, sir.*
 George: *Look, Condi. I need to know the name of the new leader of China. Get me the Secretary General of the UN on the phone.*
 Condi: *Kofi?*
 George: *No, thanks.*
 Condi: *You want Kofi?*
 George: *No.*
 Condi: *You don't want Kofi.*
 George: *No. But now that you mention it, I could use a glass of milk. And then get me the UN.*
 Condi: *Yes, sir.*
 George: *Not Yassir! The guy at the UN*
 Condi: *Kofi?*
 George: *Milk! Will you please make the call?*
 Condi: *And call who?*
 George: *Who is the guy at the UN?*
 Condi: *Hu is the guy in China.*
 George: *Will you stay out of China?!*
 Condi: *Yes, sir.*
 George: *And stay out of the Middle East! Just get me the guy at the UN*
 Condi: *Kofi.*
 George: *All right! With cream and two sugars. Now get on the phone.*
(Condi picks up the phone.)
 Condi: *Rice, here.*
 George: *Rice? Good idea. And a couple of egg rolls, too. Maybe we should send some to the guy in China. And the Middle East. Can you get Chinese food in the Middle East?*

Right about now, I'll bet good ole Dubya wishes he could get Chinese food in the Middle East, or where it used to be. It was a lot easier when Yassir was around, but he had to go and die on us. I'll just bet Dubya was happy when the UN quit serving Kofi. They probably serve Tea now. What was the book, Kofi, Tea or Me? Remember... I wonder if Doc McCoy remembers that? Guess not, he died before this all started. And someone finally beamed Scotty up.

And to top it all off, Paul Allen owns Captain Kirk's chair. He probably sits in it when he's running SETI. Man, it must be nice to have money. Paul funded Space Ship One, but one can speculate that Burt refused to name it Enterprise. I should have asked his brother Dick when I had dinner with him and a hundred other people one night in California City.

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You tend to get bored sitting at the entrance on swing shift and we talked of many things. We had enough adventures over the course of 65x3=195 years, give or take. Probably over 200 years, but I can tell you it seems like a longer than that. Sometimes, I swear I feel 200 years old, all by myself. No matter how carefully a project is planned, something may still go wrong with it. The saying is adapted from a line in *To a Mouse* by Robert Burns: *The best laid schemes o' mice an' men / Gang aft a-gley*. (often paraphrased as *The best-laid plans of mice and men / Often go awry*). Steinbeck borrowed the poem for a book title, of *Mice and Men*, which predated *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Ron didn't count the legal vehicles; we were only interested in any illegal vehicles that turned into Moon Shadows. It was just before shift change when a vehicle pulled in and tooted its horn. I looked and I knew the faces, not the names.

They were some of that bunch that had been settled in the tract by the government. Apparently, they'd been to a private party and instead of spending the night, as they should have done, they risked coming home. Take it from one who knows from personal experience, or ask all three of us, drunks tend to be noisy. The booze befuddles the brain and somehow reduces a person's hearing ability. It generally washes away any vestige of common sense.

"Move that damned roadblock. Let us in." Toot, toooot.

"Quiet down fellas, John Law is due by any minute. Give us a minute to start it up and move it. Clarence, you move the car and Gar-Bear keep a lookout for the cops."

"Well hurry up, would you."

"Say please."

"Kiss my rosy red, fella. Open up."

Click (think about it)

"I'll handle this Ron, I'm a permanent resident. Shut your yap, fella and quiet down. That vehicle is hard to start when the engine is cold."

"Do I know you?"

"I live at 4560 Moonraker and I have since '87. Nobody likes a drunk, especially a noisy drunk who is out after curfew."

Tooooooooooot.

"Get out of the car! I want to see some ID and proof that you live here."

"Look out, here come the cops."

"Get out of the car, right now."

"Move the pickup."

"Don't you just hate it when they won't say please, partner?"

"Gary, are you in condition 0?"

"How do you spell bippy? You bet your sweet bippy I am." (Rowan and Martin)

"Waz that mean, condition 0?"

"Ask that nice Deputy Sheriff, he'll be glad to explain."

Now I don't know why, but the Deputies seem to think they must run that siren, if only for a couple of seconds. We know they're there; they turned on the red lights, no doubt as a safety consideration due to the heavy, non-existent traffic. Then, with the drunks blocked by the pickup that Clarence can't get to start, they sorta sashay up, loosen the flap on their 9mm pistol holsters and YELL, "OUT OF THE CAR!"

Click (Condition 1), port arms, as it were.

"Depity, he says his rifle is in condition 0, what does that mean?"

"Have you been drinking?"

"Jus a couple."

"Did you just pull in?"

"Yesh."

"Were you aware there is a curfew, dust to dawn?"

"Yesh."

So by this time, partly because of the quantity consumed and partly because of the temperature, the driver's tongue is getting a bit on the thick side. Clarence is cranking the starter, but the pickup won't start. He gave up in frustration and got out of the pickup.

"Sorry Gar-ree, it won't start."

Meanwhile the Deputy is inspecting my M1A closely and sees a short 10-round magazine and that the safety is on. I just stand there doing my best imitation of port arms, we

didn't learn that crap in the Air Force. I'll cover that in a minute. I know that Port Arms is where the rifle is diagonally across the body, muzzle up to the left, butt down to the right and that's about ALL I know. Since one hand is on the forearm and the other isn't anywhere near the trigger, it's a safe position to assume. After a moment or two of scrutiny, the Deputy returns to the drunks. I hand Clarence my rifle and fire up the pickup, he just needed to pump the gas pedal.

"Turn off the pickup, it isn't moving," the Deputy instructed.

"Yes Sir (butthead) Deputy."

In about two minutes, they have cuffs on all 3 men and stuff them in the squad car. The driver is being charged with DUI and being out after curfew. The other 2 are charged with public intoxication and being out after curfew. As soon as they left, we restarted the pickup and pulled the car down to their driveway. About 10 minutes later we were re-lived and went home. I needed some instruction from Derek in the Manual of Arms. A manual of arms was an instruction book for handling and using weapons in formation, whether in the field or on parade. Our first one was written by Friedrich Wilhelm Ludolf Gerhard Augustin von Steuben, Freiherr von Steuben for the Continental Army.

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"Gary, do you have a minute?"

"Sure Lance, what's up?"

"Did you have any trouble on the entrance last night when the 3 of you were pulling guard duty?"

"We had a disturbance, I guess. Around 11:30, three of those resident non-residents pulled in drunk. Clarence had trouble getting the pickup started and they tooted their horn and were mouthy. I had enough and told them to get out of the car. Just about then, the Deputy Sheriff's showed up and hauled them away for being drunk and out after curfew."

"Did you threaten any of them?"

"No, I wouldn't say that I did. I didn't point my rifle at anyone, if that's what you mean."

"The guy filed a complaint and said you threatened him with a gun. Did you?"

"I had my rifle in condition 1 most of the shift, but the only difference between condition 1 and condition 0 is clicking the safety off. I may have done that, but if I did, I'm sure I put it right back on, the Deputy checked. I don't point my rifle unless I intend to shoot, you know that."

"And you had your California legal magazine in the rifle?"

"Yes, I kept all of my high capacity magazines out of view. Same with my pistol, I had a CA legal mag in it, too."

"And you never pointed a weapon at anyone?"

"I have 2 witnesses, Ron and Clarence. Maybe we shouldn't be on guard duty, if you don't trust me."

"Well, I didn't say that."

"No, that was me you heard talking, I said it. We didn't invite the riffraff to move here in the first place. The government moved them in, remember?" (riffraff are rabble; people who are disreputable or undesirable)

"Haven't we had enough trouble, I mean you shot that guy just because he pissed you off. Now this, it's been suggested that you 3 delayed entry to those residents ensuring the cops would show up and arrest them for curfew violations and being drunk."

"Could be, but with the way they were acting, we had to be sure who they were. I simply asked them to quiet down and to produce identification. I thought I recognized them but I wasn't sure. Clarence couldn't get the pickup to start; you really should have Chris look at it. We wouldn't want to let in some look alike to do who knows what. I've paid my dues here and took a bullet for my trouble. Leave me out of it, talk to Ron and Clarence and then decide. I can't see any reason to risk my life, our lives, and have to put up with a bunch of BS. Tell Ron and Clarence what you decide, they'll let me know."

That's when it got interesting, apparently, Lance told Ron and Clarence that I had an attitude. Fine, if another disaster happens, you can stay in your own shelter, Lance. When Ron said we were having a blizzard the day of the earthquake, I had to dispute that because, bad things happen in 3s. A blizzard in Palmdale would make for number 4. If you have 4, you'll end up having 9, or even 27. I needed to consult with Derek (not Derrick) about the manual of arms, although I wasn't sure why. Old men don't need to learn military parade maneuvers.

The Bird Flu – Chapter 18

"Manual of Arms? Sure why not. Everything revolves around Port Arms, pay attention."

STEP I

1. Platoon, ATTENTION. AT EASE. The next movements, which I will name, explain, have demonstrated, and which you will conduct practical work on, are port arms from order arms and order arms from port arms.
2. Port arms is the key position assumed in most manual of arms movements from one position to another. Order arms from port arms is used to return the rifle to the position of attention.
3. The commands for these movements are Port, ARMS and Order, ARMS.
4. Port, ARMS and Order, ARMS are two-part commands, Port and Order are the preparatory commands, and ARMS is the command of execution.
5. When given, these commands are as follows: Port, ARMS. Order, ARMS.

STEP II

6. Demonstrator, POST. I will use the by-the-numbers method of instruction.
7. Port arms from order arms is a two-count movement. On the command of execution ARMS of Port, ARMS, this being count one, grasp the barrel of the rifle with the right hand and raise the rifle diagonally across the body, keeping the right elbow down (without strain). With the left hand, simultaneously grasp the hand guard just forward of the sling so that the rifle is about four inches from the waist. By-the-numbers, Port, ARMS.
8. On count two, regasp the rifle at the small of the stock with right hand. Hold the rifle diagonally across the body, about four inches from the waist, the right forearm horizontal, and the elbows close to the sides. Ready, TWO.
9. Order arms from port arms is a three-count movement. On the command of execution ARMS of Order, ARMS, this being count one, move the right hand up and across the body to the right front of the front sight assembly, grasp the barrel firmly without moving the rifle, and keep the right elbow down without strain. Order, ARMS.
10. On count two, move the left hand from the hand guard and lower the rifle to the right side until it is about one inch off the marching surface. Guide the rifle to the right side by placing the forefinger of the left hand at the flash suppressor (compensator), fingers and thumb extended and joined, palm to the rear. Ready, TWO.
11. On count three, move the left hand sharply to the left side, lower the rifle gently to the marching surface, and resume the position of order arms. Ready, THREE. Port, ARMS, Ready, TWO. Order, ARMS. Ready, TWO. Ready, THREE.
12. At normal cadence, these movements would look as follows: Without-the-numbers, Port, ARMS. Order, ARMS. AT EASE.
13. What are your questions pertaining to these movements when executed at normal cadence or using the by-the-numbers method of instruction?
14. Demonstrator, ATTENTION. You will now become my assistant instructor. FALL OUT.

"I've got a Blue Book somewhere (FM 22.5), I'll dig it out and you can study."

"That's all there is to it?"

"Exact position of the rifle is very important and each weapon has a different Manual of Arms. I don't know if I have one for the M14, I'll look."

"Thanks kid, I appreciate it. It may not make any difference anyway; we had some trouble guarding the entrance last night. Just the type of trouble you'd expect from 3 drunks showing up hours after curfew went into effect. I might have overreacted, but I won't back down now. I'll read the book when you find it and try to learn to execute the moves properly."

Mind you, he did that from memory, he said he'd been through it so many times he had it down pat, for an M16 rifle. That didn't help a lot; an M1A wasn't quite the same as that Mattel Toy gun the military used."

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I got an email a few years back from a friend forwarding something he'd gotten for someone else. It may explain the problems we've had with Muslims.

This is something I've wondered about for some time now: How & why do the Muslims hate us & everyone else so much? Doesn't their God teach them to love?

Can a good Muslim be a good American?

Theologically - no. Because his allegiance is to Allah, the moon god of Arabia.

Religiously - no. Because no other religion is accepted by his Allah except Islam (Quran, 2:256)

Scripturally - no. Because his allegiance is to the five pillars of Islam and the Quran (Koran).

Geographically - no. Because his allegiance is to Mecca, to which he turns in prayer five times a day.

Socially - no. Because his allegiance to Islam forbids him to make friends with Christians or Jews.

Politically - no. Because he must submit to the mullah (spiritual leaders), who teach annihilation of Israel and Destruction of America, the great Satan.

Domestically - no. Because he is instructed to marry four women and beat and scourge his wife when she disobeys him (Quran 4:34).

Intellectually - no. Because he cannot accept the American Constitution since it is based on Biblical principles and he believes the Bible to be corrupt.

Philosophically - no. Because Islam, Muhammad, and the Quran do not allow freedom of religion and expression. Democracy and Islam cannot co-exist. Every Muslim government is either dictatorial or autocratic

Spiritually - no. Because when we declare "one nation under God," the Christian's God is loving and kind, while Allah is NEVER referred to as heavenly father, nor is he ever called love in The Quran's 99 excellent names.

Therefore after much study and deliberation....perhaps we should be very suspicious of ALL MUSLIMS in this country. They obviously cannot be both "good" Muslims and good Americans.

Call it what you wish....it's still the truth.

The war is bigger than we know or understand. Plus 1/3 of all the Jews in the World live in the US.

o

I think that came when we were still in the Middle East, when there was still a Middle East. While that's not timely, what with us being into our 3rd disaster, it sure explains a lot, if you agree with it. I do, but I'm an oddball. They say, *you can never go home again*. Tell me, who would want to? It sounds like something Tennessee Williams (Thomas Wolfe) would have said. Anyway, back to the tale...

"An attitude? What kind of attitude? The usual connotation of the expression is a negative attitude, right?"

"Well, Gar-ree, he didn't really come out and say that. Lance said we could continue on guard duty, but we told him we'd have to think it over. What's your opinion?"

"I feel like you're damned if you do and damned if you don't. I seem to recall hearing that I got shot pulling guard duty. We got some of the riffraff coming in drunk about 6½ hours after curfew began, and somehow I end up being the bad guy. Why don't the two you decide and I'll go along with that decision?"

"I say screw 'em, Gar-Bear. I don't live here, we're really just waiting out our home being completed and the shelter finished up. And, man, you should hear Lyn go on about that shelter. We had the bird flu. We had WW III. And we had the Big One, what else could happen, she asks."

"I tend to agree with Linda, Ron. We've had our 3 disasters. I should point out that this last one isn't over yet, not by a long sight. We haven't had the MZBs, show up yet, the

government hasn't tried to capitalize on the disasters to remove all of our freedoms and there's that asteroid waiting out there to slam into the planet with little warning."

"No sweat, Gar-ree, I'm watching."

"Doesn't your neck get sore?"

"Sometimes."

"Partner, the things you describe are beyond our control, unless of course, you want to start the Second American Revolution."

"I don't think so, did that in my last story."

"Who won?"

"The American Army, that's who. Most Americans are natural born Patriots. The problem seems to be in getting them to recognize the fact. It takes something like 9/11 to bring out that Patriotic spirit. The problem seems to be that it doesn't last long."

"Does that apply to you? I only ask because I've heard you make a few negative comments about the war in Iraq."

"When I was young, and much more foolish, I supported the Vietnam War. It was more a matter of supporting our fighting men than it was the national policy. Then we learned the awful truth about Vietnam and the role the government played in making sure we couldn't win the war. Hell, I still support the fighting men, and women, of our armed forces, they don't make policy. The government betrays them by not maintaining a large enough standing military, not supplying critically needed equipment and micromanaging everything. Ever since Ronnie Ray-gun brought up Star Wars, the Defense Department has been focused on the latest technology. They seem to overlook the fact that it's Marines, soldiers, sailors and airmen who have to use the technology, much of which doesn't seem to work as well as they thought."

"Yeah, but..."

"But what? *That's a fact, Jack*, to quote Bill Murray in Stripes. How many of your kids have served in the military, partner? The answer is none. Derek did Korea, Kosovo and Iraq. Damon was doing pretty good in the Navy until he punched out a Chief who accused him of gundecking repairs on a piece of equipment. It was an intermittent problem that only showed up after the unit had been in service for a while and couldn't be reproduced on the bench. They gave him a section 8. Be that as it may, they both served."

"Mighty proud of those boys, aren't you Gar-ree?"

"You bet your sweet bippy, I am. You want to continue on guard duty, just say so, I'm willing. I'll tell you though, I wouldn't mind having 3 sets of that Dragon Skin body armor."

o

February 17, 2007, 0350 curbside at 24th and M, Washington DC. 16 Degrees with a light breeze. Going home after my second week of freezing temps to my home in SoCal. Fly my aircraft, ride a horse, climb a mountain and get back to living. I'm tired of the cold.

0425 paying the taxi fare at Dulles in front of the United Airlines counter, still cold.

0450 engaging the self-serve ticker machine and it delivers my ticket, baggage tag and boarding pass. Hmmm, that Marine is all dressed up early...? Oh, maybe, Hmm, "Good Morning Captain, you're looking sharp."

Pass Security and to my gate for a quick decaf coffee and 5 hours sleep. A quick check of the flight status monitor and UA Flt 211 is on time, I'm up front, how bad can it be? Hmmm, that same Marine, he must be heading to Pendleton to see his lady at LAX for the long weekend all dressed up like that....? Or maybe not?

"Attention in the boarding area, we will begin boarding in 10 minutes, we have some additional duties to attend to this morning but we will have you out of here on time."

That Captain now has five others with him, BINGO, I get it, he is not visiting his lady, he's an official escort. How I remember doing that once, CACO duty. I still remember the names of the victim and family, The Bruno Family in Mojave..., all of them, wow, that was 24 years ago. I wonder if we will ever know who and why?

On board, 0600: "Good morning folks this is the Captain. This morning we have been attending to some additional duties and I apologize for being 10 minutes late for pushback but believe me we will be early to LAX. This morning it is my sad pleasure to announce that 1st LT Jared Landaker USMC will be flying with us to his Big Bear home in Southern California. Jared lost his life over the skies of Iraq earlier this month and today we have the honor of returning him home along with his Mother, Father, Brother and uncles. Please join me in making the journey comfortable for the Landaker family and their uniformed escort. Now sit back and enjoy our ride, we are not expecting any turbulence until we reach the Rocky Mountains and at that time we will do what we can to ensure a smooth ride. For those interested you can listen in to our progress on button 9."

Up button 9: "Good morning UA 211 you are cleared to taxi, takeoff and cleared to LAX as filed." From the time we started rolling we never stopped. 1st LT Landaker began receiving his due.

4 hours and 35 minutes later over Big Bear MT, the AB320 makes a left roll and steep bank and then one to the right...Nice touch CAPTAIN. Five minutes out from landing, the Captain, "Ladies and Gents after landing I'm leaving the fasten seatbelt sign on and I ask everyone in advance to yield to the Landaker family. Please remain seated until all members have departed the aircraft. Thank you for your patience, we are 20 minutes early."

On roll out, I notice red lights, emergency vehicles everywhere. We are being escorted directly to our gate, no waiting anywhere, not even a pause. Out the left window, a dozen Marines in full dress blues. Highway Patrol, Police, Fire crews all in full dress with lights on. A true class act by everyone, down to a person from coast to coast. Way to go United Airlines for doing the little things RIGHT, because they are the big things; Air Traffic Control for getting the message, to all law enforcement for your display of brotherhood.

When the family departed the aircraft everyone sat silent, then I heard a lady say, "God Bless You and your Family, Thank You." Then another, then another, then a somber round of applause. The Captain read a prepared note from Mrs. Landaker to the effect, "Thank you all for your patience and heartfelt concern for us and our son. We sincerely appreciate the sentiment. It is nice to have Jared home."

After departing the a/c I found myself along with 30 others from our flight looking for a window. Not a dry eye in the craft. All of us were balling like babies. It was one of the most emotional moments of my life. We all stood silent and watched as Jared was taken by his honor guard to an awaiting hearse. Then the motorcade slowly made its way off the ramp.

I have finally seen the silent majority. It is deep within us all. Black, Brown, White, Yellow, Red, Purple, we are all children, parents, brothers, sisters, etc...we are an American family.

What you don't know is that on the flight I was tapped on the shoulder by Mrs. Landaker who introduced herself to me after I awoke.

Early in our taxi out from the gate at Dulles, the gent next to me (a Fairfax City Council Member and acquaintance of the Thuot family) were talking to the flight attendant and mentioned that we had sons serving on active duty, "What do you say? How tragic, they must be devastated." He said many of the passengers had told him the same thing so somewhere in the flight he shared his tidbits with Mrs. Landaker. Our flight attendant had been struggling with what to say, to find the right words, so he told the Landaker family of passengers who were parents of service members who connected with their grief as parents. After I gathered myself, I stepped back to their row, two behind me and introduced myself to Mr. Landaker (a Veteran of South East Asia as a Tanker) and Jared's uncle and brother. What a somber moment. Their Marine Captain escort was a first rate class act. He had been Jared's tactics instructor and volunteered for this assign-

ment, as he said, "Sir, it is the least I could do, he was my friend and a great stick. He absolutely loved to fly, It's an honor to be here on his last flight."

1115: On my connecting flight, my mind raced. How lucky I was to have had an opportunity to fly my father to Spain and ride the carrier USS John F. Kennedy home in 1981. The same year Jared was born. How lucky I was to have my father on the crows landing when I made my final cat shot in an F-14. Jared's father never had that chance. Jared was at war, 10,000 miles away.

When Mr. Landaker and I were talking he shared with me, "When Jared was born he had no soft spot on his head and Dr's feared he would be developmentally challenged. He became a Physics Major with Honors, high school and college athlete, and graduated with distinction from naval aviation flight school! He was short in stature, but a Marine all the way."

February 7, 2007, Anbar Province, Iraq. 1st LT Jared Landaker United States Marine Corps, Hero, from Big Bear California, gave his live in service to his country. Fatally wounded when his CH-46 helicopter was shot down by enemy fire, Jared and his crew all perished. His life was the ultimate sacrifice of a grateful military family and nation. His death occurred at the same time as Anna Nicole Smith, a drug using person with a 7th grade education of no pedigree who dominated our news for two weeks while Jared became a number on CNN. And most unfortunately, Jared's death underscores a fact that we are a military at war, not a nation at war. Until we become a nation committed to winning the fight, and elect leaders with the spine to ask Americans to sacrifice in order to win, we shall remain committed to being a nation with a military at war, and nothing more. (And possibly no funding if congress has their way!)

1st LT Landaker, a man I came to know in the sky's over America on 17 February 2007, from me to you, aviator to aviator, I am unbelievably humbled. It was my high honor to share your last flight. God bless you.

Semper Fi

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"Where do we get that?"

"Pinnacle Armor up in Fresno. The SOV-2000™ Level III, with large standard tactical front and back panel configuration weighs 16.5 lbs. and varies depending on the level of coverage needed. The SOV-3000™ Level IV, with large standard tactical front and back panel configuration weighs approximately 17.2 lbs. and varies depending on the level of coverage needed. The SOV-2000™ and SOV-3000™ are manufactured with a ceramic composite."

"How far to Fresno?"

"About 210 miles."

"Do you have an address?"

"5425 East Home Avenue #104"

"Are you sure they didn't nuke Bakersfield?"

"No. But taking 99 is the quickest and shortest trip. We can take Ave D to I-5 and down the Grapevine to 99 to Fresno. I think if Bakersfield got nuked, we'd have heard about it."

"Are you sure the Grapevine is open?"

"Look, if you don't want to go, just say so. Damon will probably take me and I'll get sets for all the members of my family."

"What about us?"

"You'll have to get your own."

"What put the burr under your saddle?"

"What's that, another Salina joke?"

"It's an expression referring to your behavior as of late. You seem to be upset by something."

"Moi?"

"Yes, you. Can you say oink, too? I'll be Kermit and Clarence will be Fozzie Bear."

"Now cut that out! Let me know, I'll talk to my boys."

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I don't know what was bothering me. The guys were right; I did have a burr under my saddle. That burr didn't hurt me, but it made the horse uncontrollable. I knew it went back to my first problem on guard duty, the night I got shot, even before the Big One. I guess maybe it was the fact that I was shot. I'd discussed Interceptor body armor and Pinnacle's Dragon Skin. On this point, Derek and I disagreed. He wore Interceptor in Iraq and had seen private contractors who wore, company provided, Dragon Skin. Regardless of any test finding, he didn't like the Dragon Skin. I was just the opposite, I'd seen tests against both brands and in my not so humble opinion, Dragon Skin won, hands down. Organizations like Soldiers For The Truth agreed with my assessment.

After the war, we had those thieves show up and I didn't have any body armor. It was one of those boy toy types of things; still, I didn't need another bullet hole, one was more than enough. I talked to Damon and Derek about it and they thought driving to Fresno was worth a shot, especially since it was only 200 or so miles.

"Ok, are you in or out? We three are going there's room for two more people in the club cab."

"I think we'll go, Gar-ree."

"We'll leave in 30 minutes; I recommend a full combat load out and reserve ammo."

I had loaded all of the 20-round magazines when we'd made our decision. I had the PowerBOSS and 35 gallons of gas plus 55 gallons of that diesel mix. There was a cooked beef roast and homemade bread for sandwiches and a box of food supplies, enough for 6 days. I had my Coleman stove and a gallon of fuel in addition to the full tank. We were gone by 8am, having not given Lance a decision.

The first leg of the journey was relatively easy, but the Grapevine hadn't been plowed out. If you know it, you realize the challenge we faced not only getting down, but getting up on the way back. We put the pickup in 4WD and descended at a slow pace. From there, it was about 35 miles to Bakersfield. Bakersfield hadn't been nuked, but few (no) people were out and about. That put us halfway to Fresno. I had an old Thomas Book, those specialized map books, covering California.

Highway 99 was in a state of disrepair, but none of the bridges were out. We arrived at the Pinnacle Armor address a little after lunchtime. It turned out to be the company of offices but aside from some product displays, no body armor. We located inventory records and finally the address of the location where the body armor was assembled. We had a sandwich and coffee, and then moved to the new location. Here, our luck improved. Pinnacle was apparently working on a large order for a law enforcement agency. LEOs buy it even if the military won't.

By late afternoon, we all found SOV 3000 that fit us and SOV 2000 to outfit our families and the other 4 permanent residents' and their families. We found an empty motel on the west side of Fresno, not far from highway 99 and holed up for the night. We dug out the things we needed to make ourselves a little more comfortable and fired up the generator to provide electricity for the 2 rooms we took. Add to our list of strange occurrences, our inability to find anyone in Fresno. Fresno is the 6th largest city in California and would have had a population approaching 600,000.

Now, I didn't say that there wasn't anyone there; I said we couldn't find anyone. With Dragon Skin in my possession, I started to return to my old self. Things like that don't happen overnight, but you should have seen the smile on my face. Clarence summed it all up when he said, *"I get it! Whether you realized it or not, you were scared to death, Gar-ree."*

"That might explain most of it Clarence. How can you tell?"

"You're smiling like that Cheshire cat in Alice in Wonderland."

"Careful, Gar-Bear, you might break your face. You wouldn't want to do that, it's ugly enough as it is."

"Screw you too, Ronald McDonald. It's heavy enough, but I may just sleep in it."

The offices for Pinnacle Armor were about 2 blocks south of the large airport, Fresno Yosemite International. Pinnacle has a line of accessories for LEOs; we took all we could find. If you're going to put your neck on the line with strategic allocation, you might just as well loot the best stuff. If it won't nourish your body, like food and water, anything you reallocate would, in normal times come from plain old fashioned stealing. As I said earlier, strategic reallocation SOUNDS better. I would suggest getting the body armor as your FIRST order of business.

Off course, if your conscience bothers you, leave a note. If the LEOs find it, they'll use it at your trial; if the bad guys find it, they'll know where to look for more supplies. Use your own discretion. Damon and I have writer's cramp and no paper or pencils. I wouldn't even risk leaving a note that only said, 'Thanks, TOM'. I'm sure I told you why we didn't go to MCLB, Barstow – there were lots of Marines there and the Corps emphasizes shooting skills. Going up against a Company or two of Marine Infantry wasn't the best way to find out who was the best shot.

◦

The dictionary defines a disaster as: a. An occurrence causing widespread destruction and distress; a catastrophe. B. grave misfortune. Wiki talks about disaster recovery. Under preventing disasters, they have a list:

- Backups sent off-site, weekly; therefore at worst no more than one week's worth of data would be lost.
- Includes software as well as all data information, to facilitate recovery
- Use a remote backup facility if possible to minimize data loss
- Storage Area Networks (SANs) over multiple sites are a recent development (since 2003) which make data immediately available without the need to recover or synchronize it
- Surge Protectors - to minimize the effect of power surges on delicate electronic equipment
- Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS)
- Fire Preventions - more alarms, accessible extinguishers
- Anti-virus software
- Insurance on hardware

The Bird Flu – Chapter 19

In my humble opinion, all of those steps mitigate a disaster, none prevent it.

Ask yourself, how do I prevent a tornado, hurricane or earthquake? Can I really prevent any disaster beyond a terrorist attack? Not usually, although you can stay in like good ol' Dubya says and avoid catching the Bird Flu. A friend and I were discussing what's going on in Russia.

I stared it off with: Don't you just love ol' Vlad?

He replied: but Georgie looked into Putie Poot's heart and knew he was a good person

I replied: Good ol' Dubya is blind as a bat.

He replied: on a good day

The nice thing about America is they don't throw you in prison for dissing the leaders, yet. Which brings up the question, again of: Who is President? None, I repeat none, of the laws provide for the situation we currently faced. The guideline used to be: A government of the people, by the people and for the people. My use of past tense is correct any way a person looks at it. Fleataxi once had Orrin Hatch as President in the North to Alaska series. I suppose we could do worse, much worse.

I can tell you, if I needed to attend church, ANY Christian church would do, even a, gulp, Baptist church. I have attended services at: Methodist, Lutheran, Evangelical Lutheran, Presbyterian, Congregational, non-denominational Christian, Church of Christ, Open Bible Standard Church, LDS, Roman Catholic and probably some I can't remember. Strangely, every one of them believes in Yahweh Elohim and Jesus. The only thing that varies is their approach or method of worship. If you ask me my religion, the answer is Christian. Denomination is a separate question.

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"We're back."

"Lance was over looking for you."

"Did you tell him we took a little road trip?"

"Yes, but I didn't tell him where you went."

"Here, try this on."

"What's that?"

"SOV 2000 body armor."

"Why would I want to wear THAT?"

While I could think of about 12 smartass answers, I knew better than to reply with one of them. I wasn't worried about getting cut off, at our age and with our medical conditions, sex was a lot like the government, past tense. However, when she gets mad, look out! Talk about attitude...

"We have enough for all of our families, including Lorrie and David, with enough left over to outfit the other permanent residents."

"How come yours says SOV 3000?"

"Some people seem to think I'm a target, I need the protection."

"You knew Lance had the Bronze Star Medal didn't you?"

"So did about 10,700+ other Army Special Forces soldiers in Vietnam."

"His has a V and oak leaf cluster."

"That means he was brave plus dumb enough to earn it twice. I have the Missileman Badge (Pocket Rocket), there weren't many more of those than there were of Bronze Star Medals, not when I got mine."

"Everyone gets the Good Conduct Ribbon, where's yours?"

"Not everyone."

"Lance, we're back. I have Dragon Skin body armor for all of the permanent resident's and their families. SOV 3000 for anyone pulling guard duty and SOV 2000 for the remainder. Please come over and pick yours up, together with your family."

"Sure, thanks. What did you guys decide about guard duty?"

"I think the answer is yes, but I'll have to confirm that. We three got the SOV 3000."

"What's the difference?"

"2000 is NIJ level III and 3000 is NIJ level IV."

"That makes sense. I'll tell Dave."

"Good. I'll contact Chris and Dick. It comes in various sizes; each person will have to try it on to get a correct fit."

"Where did you guys take off to?"

"Fresno. Pinnacle Armor is located there."

"See many people?"

"That's the strange part, we didn't see anyone."

"So you didn't buy the body armor?"

"I was willing, but you have to have someone to give the money to. We strategically re-allocated an order they were working on for some Law Enforcement Agency. We have some of the breeching blankets for the babies. They're rated NIJ level IIIA."

"I wish you had let me know you were taking off, I had to scramble to get guards to cover the front entrance last night."

"Did you get that complaint resolved?"

"The Deputies backed up what you said. And, you did admit that you may have clicked the safety off for a few moments so I'd say it's resolved. We'll be right over."

"What's that knife you have attached to that chest harness?"

"First Blood, the original Rambo Knife."

"I didn't realize it was that large."

"My smaller knife, the Explorer (I think) is on the other harness. Derek has Rambo III and Mary has Rambo II."

"Real ones or knock offs?"

"Knock offs. There's no way I could afford the real ones. I haven't been able to find my #4 Surgical Arkansas stone for a few years, so they aren't as sharp as they could be."

"How sharp is that?"

"They use the #4 stone on scalpels."

"What do you have?"

"A combined course and fine carborundum plus a combined #2 and #3 Arkansas stone. The stone that came with the Explorer is a #2 Arkansas."

"How high do the numbers go?"

"All the way to #6."

What I'd really like to have is a full set of the Arkansas stones ranging from #1 to #6, in 2 styles, pocket stones and bench stones. I'd also love to own a Lamborghini. It's just my opinion, for what that's worth, but a person should have a couple of Arkansas stones and a combo carborundum for the kitchen knives and to get a start on a neglected hunting/fighting knife. Yes, I'm spitting but there's no stone in the other hand. I'd really like to find my #4 stone. I just looked, again, still can't find it. Like so many things I had, it grew legs. Somewhere I have a box containing about \$200 worth of gun supplies, cleaning kits, etc. At one time I had a black 5 drawer filing cabinet filled with firearm supplies and accessories.

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For your info, West Marine sells pints of PRI-G for \$21.99 plus shipping. Their number is: 1-800-685-4838. The PRI products are in the category Engine Systems>>Engine Lubrication>>Fuel Additives.

Battery Stuff has the additives up to gallon size. BatteryStuff.com – P.O. Box 1703 – Rogue River, OR 97537 Order line: 1-800-362-5397

If you don't like the PRI products, West Marine and just about everyone else sells STA-BIL.

To quote Andy Anderson at Battery Stuff:

There is a lot of talk about long term fuel storage. There are many situations where fuel storage and restoration need to be considered, like when equipment is put into storage more than a couple weeks, such as RV's, motorcycles, boats, classic cars, etc.

I am often asked about gasoline, kerosene, and diesel fuel storage. I decided to put the info I know on the Internet. Some information on the Internet is wrong and some is old. One document I found on fuel storage dates back to the 80's and fuels have had many major changes due to environmental concerns over the past 2 decades.

Most folks just want to know the basics. The fuels we buy are made for seasons and regions. Gas and diesel fuels are blended for the ambient temperatures of the area where they are purchased. For example, the winter time fuel needs are quite different in Tampa, Florida as compared to Minot, North Dakota. If you store fuel purchased in the summer you may experience wintertime operation problems. In the case of diesel the fuel may cloud or gel. In the case of gasoline, the gas may not vaporize well and cause starting problems. If you are storing fuel in a boat, RV, generator, tractor, auto, etc., it is best to leave the fuel tank full and use a commercial grade fuel stabilizer prior to equipment storage. We sell PRI (Power Research Inc) Fuel Treatments.

Today over 30% of gasoline sold is oxygenated and gasoline does not store as well as non-oxygenated gasoline. If you have a choice, pick gas without MTBE or ETBE additives.

There is no advantage to using higher octane gasoline; in fact, high octane gas can be a disadvantage in many newer design engines and engines operating with a governed speed such as a generator. You should use what your operator's manual instructs you to use.

Kerosene is what is added to diesel fuel for subzero wintertime use; at the truck stop they call it #1 diesel fuel. I suggest that Kerosene be treated as diesel fuel using PRI-D Fuel Treatment when storing and preventing algae growth. Here are some tips for storing diesel fuels and gasoline in barrels, tanks, and other types of containers. Keep fuel in a cool area and avoid wide temperature swings. Keep storage containers free of water and harmful metals. If you are storing in plastic type containers be sure these containers can handle fuel. Be sure the tanks are clean.

To keep fuel free of water, above ground tanks should have no contact with the ground. Underground tanks should be set in soil and rock for improved water drainage.

Wide temperature swings can be avoided by placing tanks in the shade or painting them with reflective paint. Metals such as copper and galvanized/zinc should not be used in fuel storage. If you use plastic, fiberglass, or other epoxy composition tanks, be sure they will stand up under the long-term hydrocarbon contact. When a large fuel tank is exposed to wide temperature swings, it should have a 2-way check valve to relieve pressure and vacuum. Most fuels produce microorganisms when water begins to collect in tanks. Commonly called algae, this stuff can be a real problem. The fuel contamination plugs filters and causes fuel system corrosion. Biocides have been developed to kill and prevent algae, bacteria, and fungus in fuels. When using fuels that have been in long term storage, don't pump from the very bottom of the tank, and filter the fuel.

There are a lot of variables that effect fuel storage. In general the use of a commercial grade fuel stabilizer on an annual basis will extend the useful life of fuel for an extra year. This annual procedure can be repeated between 5 and 10 times, thus giving fuel between 5 and 10 years of storage life.

Now comes the self-serving part. BatteryStuff.com sells commercial grade fuel treatments and additives. Power Research Incorporated (PRI) treatments preserve and restore fuel freshness. PRI-G for gasoline, and PRI-D for diesel, kerosene and home heating oil extends fuel storage life for all fuels. PRI recommends that for long-long storage, all fuels be re-treated annually at the normal dosage rate to ensure maximum freshness and performance. While laboratory tests show that PRI chemistry can preserve fuel freshness with just one treatment for 5 to 10 years, the length of fuel preservation is affected by the original condition of the fuel and the storage conditions. For maximum protection, follow the suggested re-treatment regimen.

PRI Fuel Treatments are capable of restoring and rejuvenating old fuels. PRI must be blended (shaken, stirred, or re-circulated) and left several minutes to several hours to restore fuel quality. In most cases the fuel will recover to engine manufacturer's fuel specification.

I want you to be aware that all manufacturers recommend the use of fuel stabilizers to protect fuel quality. Yes, I mean Ford, GM, Cat, Detroit, Cummins, Mercury Marine, Briggs & Stratton, etc. Folks run out and buy highly advertised STA-BIL or other over-priced fuel products that may or may not work. Come to the BatteryStuff.com home page to learn more. We sell products that work and have a proven track record.

His credentials: I am Andy Anderson "The Maintenance Guy". I am a mechanic, race car builder/driver, and member of Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE). Many of you have attended my seminars at RV rallies or have read one of my articles. I felt the need to seek out the best preventive maintenance (P/M) products in the marketplace today for you and I to use. Why? What's our goal? To protect our investment, improve performance, reliability, and longevity, and save money.

Let me add, again – If you don't like PRI Products, don't use them. Don't believe the folks at Power Research, Andy Anderson or me. Just don't call any of us and complain if your fuels aren't properly preserved, should that be your choice. I'm not saying STA-BIL doesn't work, I'm suggesting that PRI products may work better and are far cheaper in the long run.

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Damon points out that 1) he didn't punch out a Chief, and 2) he did get accused of gundecking a piece of equipment and that the second time he had it on the bench it wouldn't work for him either. He had the part on order when he voluntarily checked himself into the Naval Hospital. They intended to separate him from the service but screwed up the paperwork and gave him an Honorable discharge. He says he likes my version better. A member of the VA is working on getting him a service connected disability. Apparently the Navy denied his first attempt and she's appealing the denial, forcing the Navy to reopen the case. (I say whatever... the story seems to have a life of its own; he ended up w/ 100%)

And, despite what I say, I don't really like cooked cabbage, broccoli or Brussels sprouts. (The term Brussels sprout is a countable whose plural form is Brussels sprouts. A commonly used alternative form is Brussel sprout, whose plural is Brussel sprouts. However, linking the name with the Belgian capital of Brussels would argue against dropping the "s" in the first word - Wiki). You can spell it however you like, as long as I don't have to eat them. The record for "speed eating" sprouts is 44 in a minute, yuck.

I doubt that any of you haven't heard of Murphy's Laws. You know they started right here at Eddie's Airplane Patch, right. Major Edward Murphy was a friend of John Strapp,

the sled rider. There are corollaries, Sod's Law and Finagle's Law, but they all say about the same.

Sod's Law: Anything that can go wrong, will.

Finagle's Law: Anything that can go wrong, will – at the worst possible moment.

Hutber's law: improvement means deterioration. (I think of the M14 rifle)

Hanlon's Razor: Never attribute to malice that which can be adequately explained by stupidity. (The M16 rifle)

Occam's Razor: All things being equal, the simplest solution tends to be the best one. (Jodie Foster in *Contact*)

Chaos Theory: can explain how small random events may affect large ecosystems in an unpredictable way. (Jurassic Park, Butterfly effect)

Unintended consequences: are situations where an action results in an outcome that is not (or not only) what is intended.

Streisand Effect: a category of Internet phenomena in which a reckless attempt to censor or remove (in particular, by the means of cease-and-desist letter) a certain piece of information (such as photograph, file or website) instead backfires, causing the information in question to be widely mirrored or distributed on file-sharing networks in a very short time. (Named after you know who)

Enough, for now.

We could start a list of fruits that are mistaken as other things. A great many common vegetables, as well as nuts and grains, are the fruit of the plant species they come from. I have a few favorite quotes, too: *Friendship is the hardest thing in the world to explain. It's not something you learn in school. But if you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything.* And, *A person who can't pay, gets another person who can't pay, to guarantee that he can pay.* Or, *Respect for the truth comes close to being the basis for all morality.*

Cassius Clay, Charles Dickens and Frank Herbert, in order, by birth name. Ok, by fame: Mohammed Ali, A Christmas Carol/Oliver Twist/A Tale of Two Cities and Dune. I wouldn't quote anyone you'd never heard of...

◦

Oh, the story... wait a minute or two please.

I read some discussion about the Oklahoma City bombing. Opinions about whether or not McVeigh did it, if he used ANFO, whether or not he was justified and so on. Opinions are like buttheads, everyone has one. I won't address those issues, although I do have an opinion. Palmdale has a large group of people trained in urban rescue, possibly because we live in a city located on the San Andreas Fault. A large group of local residents went to Oklahoma City to assist in the rescue/recover operations. One local restaurant helped sponsor that trip or something; they have a wall of photos taken by the Palmdale folks when they were there.

In addition I've spent hours researching the issue, on the web mostly. The ANFO mixture used was made with Nitromethane as the FO component. That added a buzz to the mixture. Thousands of man-hours were spent by professionals researching why the quantity of ANFO used had the effect it apparently did. Some of the damage can be attributed to the building design. Some can be attributed to the nature of the explosive and perhaps, some can be attributed to just plain bad luck.

McVeigh and Nicolas were convicted and McVeigh was executed, none of which brings back any of those dead people or really comforts the living. The act constituted Domestic Terrorism, regardless of WHO did it. To my way of thinking, the question has to be is there ever any justification for terrorism? We most all think that what happened at Ruby Ridge and in Waco wasn't our government's finest hour. Remember, when your dead, that's it, Jesus isn't around to raise you like Lazarus.

Any unjustified/unexcused killing is called murder. The 6th Commandment says, *thou shall not murder*. Honestly, that's the correct translation. In 1997, the Boundary County, Idaho district attorney charged Horiuchi (the Ruby Ridge sniper) with involuntary manslaughter, but the indictment was removed to federal jurisdiction based on the Supremacy Clause. The indictment was dismissed first by the Federal District Court, but the dismissal was reversed by an en banc panel of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. Shortly after the 9th Circuit issued its decision, however, the prosecutor moved to dismiss the case, and the US District Court granted the motion on 26Jun01.

Concerning Waco, the government conducted an investigation of itself, launching a special inquiry before the Danforth Committee, and during official testimony the FBI denied the use of, or even access to, pyrotechnic devices of any kind. The Danforth Committee issued a report concluding that the fire was started on the inside by Davidians. However, in 1999 the FBI was forced to admit that the testimony they gave before the Danforth Committee was false. The FBI now admits to using Flite-Rite pyrotechnic grenades on the day of the fire; the timing of their use remains in dispute. The FBI's admission of false testimony before the Danforth Committee brings into question the validity of the committee's conclusions, and no new government inquiries have been conducted.

In a perfect world, we would all know what the truth is, but the world is far from perfect. If it were, there wouldn't be any basis for most of my stories. Who made the determination that resulted in the standoffs? Like it or not, the answers are: Randy Weaver and

David Koresh. Gerry Spence got Randy Weaver acquitted of most of the charges. David Koresh was dead and the government put some of the survivors on trial. All were acquitted of conspiring to murder federal agents but some were convicted of aiding and abetting voluntary manslaughter.

How many people were killed in the Marine Barracks bombing? How many when the Cole was bombed? How about the '93 World Trade Center bombing or 9/11? What do these things have to do with Oklahoma City? They were terrorist acts. A 1983 study by Dutch political scientist Alex Schmid found that 109 definitions of terrorism had been advanced between 1936 and 1981. Wiki says, 'Terrorism is a term used to describe violence or other harmful acts committed (or threatened) against civilians by groups or persons for political or ideological goals.

That sort of makes the Marine Barracks bombing, the Cole bombing and the plane slamming into the Pentagon acts of something other than terrorism. Do you buy that? I don't. It gets pretty difficult to define terrorism if the definition must be so narrow. But, my question was, is there ever any justification for terrorism? Surely not to the victims, regardless of anything else. The only act of terrorism I could ever justify is one I committed myself, but that would really be a rationalization. Fourth Generation War can embrace terrorism, but that doesn't justify it. Nothing does.

I'm not saying my government right or wrong. I'm saying that's it's the only one we have. Say, does anyone know who the President is?

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I threw a couple of swipes on Sharon's favorite knife with my soft Arkansas stone and she said it cut better. As far as my attitude went, it was most definitely improved, now that I had SOV 3000. Funny what fear will do to a person. It's also strange how hard it is to figure out what's bothering a person at times. It's especially true if you're talking about an issue that would affect the person's sense of self-worth.

The next night, the 3 of us were back on the front entrance. Some things hadn't changed; I still kept my rifle in condition 1 and my .45 in condition 2. However, I showed Clarence the trick to get the pickup to start and let the two of them handle anyone who showed up after curfew. I had to ease into this, changing your attitude takes time. On those rare occasions when someone showed up after curfew, I stayed out of it. Now, that didn't necessarily mean that my rifle didn't cycle between condition 1 and 0, but it meant I kept my mouth shut.

I had a birthday coming up in about a month, 3/23/10 and I'd turn 67.

Sharon let on she'd have a special birthday present, but didn't give me a single hint what it might be. I knew better than to ask, too. Of course, I ran through several lists of things I would like to have. As it later turned out, what she had wasn't on any of my lists. Moving into March, very little of the damage had been repaired and it appeared Ron

might be here until summer. You may recall that he originally expected their home to be ready around my birthday. Or, was that when the contractor would get to it? And a few weeks later, I still agree with Linda, we've had our 3 disasters. Why build a shelter now? The good news was they finished the repairs on the Avenue R water main while we were in Fresno and we finally had water. We also had hot water, Dick had switched the jets, one more time, and we were running on propane, again.

Dick had shown Chris and Dave how to do it and it went much quicker. They only changed the jets for the people who had propane and that tank out front had been moved to Ron's. There was no way I was going to share though, Chris, Lance, Dave and Dick all had propane, as did my kids. Not with these outsiders who made little effort to participate in the tracts affairs. Then I remembered John Jacobs, he was still here and still pulling guard duty. I figured I could spare some propane for him, 50 gallons to start and could maybe refill his bottles a couple of times.

With that in mind, I went over and talked to Lance; I wanted to know how many of the temporary residents were pulling guard duty. I was surprised that about 35 homes had someone helping with guard details. I didn't have enough of the 100# bottles to supply that many people."

"Ron, can you get me any of those 100# propane bottles?"

"How many?"

"Let's say 60. With the fifteen hundred gallons of propane I have, I thought maybe I should give John Jacobs 2 bottles. I realized I was doing it because he's pulling guard duty, so I checked with Lance to see how many of the temporary residents were assisting with guard duties. He told me about 35 homes had someone working guard. I don't have enough bottles and frankly, probably don't have enough propane."

"What if I got you 60 filled propane bottles?"

"You can do that? Those are 25 gallon bottles; that's 1,500 gallons of propane."

"Well, I can't get them refilled, but I can get 60 filled bottles. Anyone who has more than 500 gallons could probably help out unless they also have a propane fueled generator. That's 3 tons of propane Gar-Bear, I can only do it in shifts, maybe 15 bottles a trip."

"I'll need the regulators too."

The Bird Flu – Chapter 20

"I'll see what I can do. You check with the people who have propane and see if they can spare any, in case we need to refill the bottles. The people will have to burn wood in their fireplaces to keep warm, no way for me to get enough propane to run furnaces."

"Well just do what you can."

I wasn't thinking about helping those folks out of any sense of Christian charity. It was more in the vein of you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. Neither did I expect any thanks, hell that might just spoil it. Besides, Rodney King came to mind asking, "Can't we all just get along?" When I counted the empty homes, I was surprised to learn that every occupied home had at least one person serving on guard duty, including one of those drunks. I hoped this approach worked, you catch more flies with honey... Unfortunately, God didn't put me in charge this day, or any day that I knew of.

Damon helped Ron and they did succeed in delivering 60 filled 100# bottles of propane. I more or less went hat in hand, I'm not too good at being humble, and offered everyone 2 bottles of propane with regulators and propane jets for their hot water heaters and kitchen stoves, which either Dick, Chris or Dave would install. Many of the newer appliances have electric ignition. That wasn't much of a problem with the stoves, use matches. My hot water heater, new in 2005, still had a pilot light and I presumed theirs did too. Ignition on demand made sense on stoves, but not on the hot water heater which was in the garage. They make them: Auto-ignition Gas Water Heater with LCD Temperature Display (from China).

Hat in hand meant rifle slung over my back, muzzle down, and no apparent pistol. My Nazi .32 auto was in my jacket pocket, condition 2. I've been known to be slow and I've been known to be stupid, but I try to avoid being both at the same time; and, at times, that's not easy. What we were offering was hot water and a means to cook. We couldn't help anyone with an electric stove or electric hot water heater. When the tract was built, it came with gas appliances including a Tappan gas stove and cheap gas hot water heater and furnace. The cheap junk lasted longer than one might have believed.

Getting along with people had never been one of my strong suits. Ron got along with more people than I did and Clarence got along with everybody, or so it seemed. It had to do with style more than anything. Anyway, I turned 67, and it became April before the contractor got started on their home. I've never known a contractor who was any good to show up early. Ron didn't explain how he was going to pay for this and I didn't ask.

I didn't like keep 20 rounds in the magazines for fear of causing the springs to lose tension. However, I had so many magazines, I could load some of the most rested ones for every duty shift. I hope that tracks, I don't have a better explanation. There were a total of 110 20-round and 2 10-round magazines for my two rifles. Each of us could carry a full case of ammo in preloaded magazines, if they hadn't been so heavy.

I was carrying 170 rounds, 8 20-round and 1 10-round magazine every time I pulled duty. Plus the .45 with 7 8-round magazines. No, I'm not done; I had Rambo I and a small Buck folder plus 6 M-67 hand grenades. That's all, it was more than enough.

"My God, what a load, that SOV 3000 adds just enough weight that I'm really loaded down."

"You may be sweating, but you're smiling. What's in the shoulder bag you carry and set under the table?"

"Two battle packs of South African, spare ammo."

"Loose or on strippers?"

"Loose. The Paki is on strippers, but I've never checked how it shoots with this rifle."

"It's in bandoleers, isn't it?"

"Yep."

"Why don't you carry bandoleers instead of the battle packs?"

"Don't you listen? I haven't checked it with this rifle."

"At this range it wouldn't make any difference."

Ron did have a point, I could reload the magazines using the stripper adapter or the built in stripper guide. Maybe tomorrow I'll fire 5 rounds and check it out. It was warmer now and most nights were warm so we were wearing only light jackets. At the beginning of the shift, Ron announced the contractor would be done with the house in a few days and would be close on the shelter. The 10,000 gallon tank had been covered over, hiding it from the view of any helicopters and had been filled. I didn't ask, but suspected Damon had a part of that action.

With the ability to cook on a real stove and take a hot shower, the temporary residents had become easier to deal with. Some offered to pay; however since it didn't cost us anything, Damon only accepted a small gratuity for the delivery. He called it his go-fer money.

It didn't take the contractor more than a few days to repair their home so they moved back in, although the shelter wasn't done. By 30Apr10, it was done and covered over. The Contractor copied our blast doors and, except for the air purification system, it was ready to use. Dave copied my AV-150 system as well as he could and Ron's could use the filters I had. I had 4 left and gave 2 to Ron. He pulled the wrought iron fence and took the extra blocks so they could have the same arrangement at home that they had

here. Chris had welded the wrought iron, actually square tubular steel tubing, using electricity from my generator to power his Mig Welder.

In 2006, Ron and Linda had replaced the fence on one side with concrete block and had planned on doing the other side in 2007. The gates were salvage, which Damon had located. Clarence wasn't going anywhere, and anything worth recovering had been brought from the wreckage of their home.

Say, you don't suppose we'd run out of bad guys, do you? My first experience with people who take advantage of people's plight had been back in '68. Salvage buyers were all over Charles City trying to buy items for 10 cents on the dollar. They got into town using the chainsaw ruse, claiming they were there to help with the cleanup. I don't think the 2 that tried to bother dad liked my shotgun. That was the day I learned the truth of the expression, *sometimes the mere presence of a firearm...*

We were getting by well when FEMA showed up; hell we were doing well after they showed, or should I say, he showed up. They were spread a little thin by now, as you can imagine. They had forms to fill out and boxes of pamphlets. While I can't speak for the others, Sharon and I didn't bother to apply for anything beyond commodities. After all the disasters, they probably didn't have any money left to give. Eighteen months after Katrina, they dispersed barely 10% of the authorized monies. Now, I rather doubt that New Orleans will ever be rebuilt.

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"We're going to cut back on the guard force, and Clarence and you are excused. If something comes up, I think I can count on you to respond."

"You know it Lance. I'll keep some magazines loaded, just in case. It won't be long before we can think about planting, the snow is nearly gone. Once it dries out enough to prepare seed beds, that will have our full attention. Have you started your seedlings?"

"Only the onions. I suppose we'd better plant some tomatoes and pepper seeds to get starts for those too."

"Our tomato plants are already up, we're planting Roma's and Beefsteak. Thought I try some of those Anaheim chilies in addition to our bell peppers. With the size of your backyard, you could probably grow a couple of tons of potatoes."

"Where do you get the starts?"

"Cut out a little meat around each of the potato eyes, when you're peeling potatoes, they'll grow."

"I heard that you're trying to make peace with the neighbors."

"Well, I met that John Jacobs and he seemed nice enough. Then I asked you how many were pulling guard duty, just to keep things fair. I hadn't realized how many you had pulling shifts. Ron could get the tanks, regulators and propane, so why not? I need to try some of that Paki in my M1A, is there any where I could go shoot besides that shooting range down San Francisquito Canyon?"

"Why not across the road?"

"No backstop."

"You should have talked to that contractor Ron hired, he could have graded one in nothing flat."

"I think they've finished Ron's shelter and have pulled out."

"Do you need to do a lot of shooting?"

"No, just check how well the Paki does in my rifle."

"Try a mile up 50th East, there are several piles of dirt, you'd be in and out before anyone noticed."

"I'll look, thanks."

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We tried that and the difference was one click of elevation. I fired 5 shots getting it right and 5 more to check it. We were gone in 600 seconds, not quite up to Nicolas Gage's standards, but fast enough. I showed Clarence how to clean an M1A afterwards. I field stripped the rifle and used Breakfree CLP plus the bore cleaner Derek insisted I buy. I was shooting under 1½ MOA, close enough. By now, I had the all-important chamber brush.

The California Earthquake insurance people set up a table at the Civic Center and Clarence and Shirley filled out the paperwork. Even with the 15% deductible, they made a profit. They got a contractor to clean up the site and put the lot on the market. It could take a while to sell, much of Palmdale was on the market. I'll jump ahead and mention that a developer bought their lot in late summer. He bought one of those garden rototillers with some of his house money and I rather suspect the remainder was either under his mattress or in his gun safe.

We got by with patching the cracks in the stucco and slapping on some matching paint. We were out the Patio cover, but if we could find the wood, it wouldn't be hard to replace and maybe cover over this time to keep out the rain. It wouldn't be difficult to find matching shingles, they were available in Lancaster from a building materials supplier and we could get by with OSB, which our builder had used for the sub roofing on our

home. We could even consider screening it in. Think about it, they have a Big One on the Fault on an average of once every 140 years, by the time we had another Big One, I'd be dead and buried.

A property tax assessor came around and revalued our home, upward. The shelter greatly raised the value. Eastside homes fared far better in the earthquake, further adding to the value. I know I must have mentioned in some story that the Westside was the high rent district. Not any more, most of the homes were closer to the fault than we were. My friend John Waldrup paid \$20,000 for his home in Gardenia in the late '60s and when he died maybe 15 years back it was worth \$300,000. It may still be there, but I doubt it, it was too close to the harbor.

The grocery store placed ads in the AV Press stating that they'd buy garden produce and you had a choice of taking either cash or slightly discounted groceries. I was good on smokes, half good on toilet paper, but we needed some things and went for the discounted groceries. Had they not offered discounted food, it wouldn't have been worth it. Besides the toilet paper and paper towels, we needed staples and spices. I traded Clarence for a bag of pinto beans and we got flour, sugar, corn meal, coffee and a few other things at Albertson's. We were able to get some things from Costco in the industrial sized packages. That included rice, pancake flour, Aunt Jemima syrup, cookie and cake mixes, spices, more toilet paper and paper towels, batteries, coffee, cases lots of canned vegetables we didn't grow, pasta sauce, cheeses, etc. Most of the food products were grown, processed and packaged in California's Central Valley. I know I'm only remembering about half of it, but you should get the general idea.

"Is there any more room in the shelter?"

"A little, why, the shelves in the garage full?"

"Over flowing. I really don't know what to do with all of the meat."

"Freeze it, of course. Are all the freezing compartments full?"

"I've rearranged them twice and we're out of room. We need another freezer."

"How about we put a chest type in the garage and move the upright to the shelter? I checked, it will fit, barely."

"Go look in the garage and figure out where you'd put it. Come back and tell me."

I looked and there was no place to put a chest type freezer in the garage.

"Ok, you win, an upright freezer is all that will fit. I'll talk to Damon and ask him to acquire one."

"You mean steal it?"

"I mean acquire one, pay for it or take it only if that's the last alternative."

"Damon, Sharon and I need an upright freezer."

"How big?"

"As big as you can find. Check with Derek, they may need a freezer and if you need 1, get 3. I'll give you a signed check and my California ID card."

He was gone for nearly 6 hours. When he returned, there were 3 very large boxes on the back of the pickup. He returned the signed blank check and began delivering the freezers. If it was that easy, I should have had him get 4, one for David and Lorrie. When I said something to him about that, he said that he'd dropped theirs off already. What he found was Frigidaire upright with a capacity of 33.7ft³. Stainless steel, no less. He said the price tag on them was \$889 but there was no one to pay.

Obviously we'd have to put the old freezer in the shelter and the new one in the garage. It just fit into the space between the hot water heater and Sharon's automatic washer. Aaron and he emptied the old freezer and wheeled it out to the patio. Next they installed the new freezer and put the frozen food back in it. Third, they lowered the old freezer, via the winch, into the shelter and set it up in the storage area. Finally, they got the packages of meat from Sharon and put most of them in the old freezer, and some in the new freezer. We now had almost 60ft³ of freezer capacity counting the freezers on the refrigerators.

A person would never want to have a freezer that large if they had a small family or lacked backup power. If the lights went out, you could lose a couple of thousand dollars' worth of meat, or more, depending on what was in the freezer.

o

"Can we get more meat?"

"I'm going to go for frozen vegetables; I know that they're available. I'll get round steak too and you can have pepper steak to your heart's content."

I'm no kind of chef, but I like pepper steak and had dreamed up my own recipe. It has few ingredients and is served over white rice.

1 thin round steak
2 packages of frozen pepper strips (We use C&W)
1 small onion
2 packages of brown gravy mix (We use bulk)
Soy sauce to taste (up to ¼ cup)
Chopped garlic (optional, we don't)

White Rice (we use Minute Rice)

Chill the steak thoroughly. Slice it in thin 1/8" strips and cut to length, about 2". Coarsely dice the onion into strips. Brown the meat in a hot skillet with a small amount of oil, adding the onion so they cook to clear but don't brown. Add the soy sauce when you begin to add the onion (and, optional garlic). Add the pepper strips and steam until they're cooked. Cooking the meat and peppers adds water to the mixture. Mix up 2 packages of brown gravy mix (it's supposed to make 2 cups) using half of the recommended water. Add to the mixture and simmer until the gravy is thick, there won't be much. Serve over white rice. Depending on taste, you may want to add additional soy sauce, individually.

o

"Gar-ree, who's on first?"

"Grab a cup and sit yourself, Clarence."

"How come you never call me partner?"

"Well, you are and you know that. I guess it's because when I wrote those stories, I used certain expressions to identify the different characters. I see you got an antenna mast up, what do you have for radios?"

"Business radio, CB and a broadband receiver. That's why I put up the Diamond D-130J. What's that funny looking vertical you have?"

"That's one of my ham antennas, an MFJ-1798, 10-band. It handles up to 1,500w PEP. I also have a Comet tri-band antenna in addition to the 11 meter antenna, business radio antenna and that Diamond D-130J. Beam antennas would give higher gain, but they're directional. I mostly listen anyway; don't seem to have much to say."

"That's a lot of antennas to have on that mast without guy wires."

"Don't I know it? If you wanted to help, we could lower it, connect guy wire to the guy wire rings and do that."

"I'd be happy to help. I owe you, you know. You kept your word and came after me when we had the Big One."

"At first I told Ron I couldn't get out and that he should try to get you. Then, when we got your radio call, I got help and we came. Who would have thought that before the day was over I'd end up shooting someone?"

"That one is between you and God, but I can help with the guy wires. You do have the cables, right?"

"Yes sir, I most certainly do."

I also had 2 large eye screws that we could screw into the ends of the house. I had planned on running the other anchor cables out to the raised area at the back of the lot and using a long piece of rebar or something. I could never decide what to use and had ended up not putting up the guy wires. Clarence was right, though, the mast needed to be guyed and quite frankly I was surprised when the earthquake didn't bring it down and destroy my antennas. The wind load on the top of the mast must be very high, with that many antennas.

We ended up using 2 10' lengths of pipe that Clarence drove into the ground and attached turnbuckles to allow us to adjust the slack. One would have thought Clarence was a piano tuner at work, he adjusted until each guy wire had the same amount of tension, based on the sound. It might not be perfect, but it was close enough. He used a pole and 2 levels to verify the mast was perfectly vertical. Although the mast was a 39' mast, I'd added another 10' to mount the MFJ on. It was 49' off the ground. My D-130J was 10' lower and served as my backup antenna, given its wide frequency range and the built in antenna tuner on the TS-2000X. I realize I hadn't told you what I had for a ham radio earlier, but would you expect me to have anything other than a TS-2000? Or, anything but a MFJ-1798 and a D-130J?

◦

Now get this: Avian influenza A virus subtype H5N1 was transmitted to domestic cats by close contact with infected birds. Virus-specific nucleic acids were detected in pharyngeal swabs from 3 of 40 randomly sampled cats from a group of 194 animals (day 8 after contact with an infected swan). All cats were transferred to a quarantine station and monitored for clinical signs, virus shedding, and antibody production until day 50. Despite unfamiliar handling, social distress, and the presence of other viral and non-viral pathogens that caused illness and poor health and compromised the immune systems, clinical signs of influenza did not develop in any of the cats. There was no evidence of horizontal transmission to other cats because antibodies against H5N1 virus developed in only 2 cats. I know, you think I forgot the title of the story.

◦

"Where are you?"

"Standing right in front of you."

"No, I meant in your story."

"Oh, page 202."

"Then it's over? You said earlier that it was a short story."

"I don't really know, Clarence. We still have a guard force for the tract, although it's reduced. I still have enough ammo to fight a couple of wars and the only people bored with the story are the readers, not me."

"What's going to happen next?"

"Damned if I know, we're still trying to get over the last three. You guess."

"I don't believe we're going to have another international or global war."

"I agree and you're on a roll."

"We had the Big One and aren't due for another 100+ years."

"Yes, more."

"We're high enough here a tsunami probably wouldn't affect us. Let's see, Yellowstone is probably due or overdue."

"That's true."

"Call that number 1. An earthquake on the New Madrid fault wouldn't affect us."

"Probably not."

"We don't get hurricanes and tornadoes are very rare."

"Right."

"What about Long Valley?"

"I don't know it's only had one major eruption."

"Call that possible. Let's see, that whatyamacallit off the coast of Washington."

"You mean the Cascadian Subduction Zone?"

"Yeah. Locked up, right?"

"About half of it is."

"Call that possibility number 2. I haven't seen any new stars in the sky, we'll eliminate that. If there is an earthquake on the northern part of the fault, it probably wouldn't affect us."

"I agree."

"We could always be attacked, let's call that number 3."

"It isn't all that hard to narrow it down, is it Clarence?"

"Terrorists could introduce a bioweapon. Nah, I don't think that's very likely. It's likely that they think the Great Satan has been destroyed."

"They wouldn't be far from wrong, you know."

"Have I covered all of the possibilities?"

"I don't know, I haven't watched Mega-Disasters since we lost TV."

"I used to watch that. La Palma wouldn't threaten us."

"Right and we're supposed to have primary elections in June."

"Who is President?"

"No, Who's on first and Hu's the new leader of China."

"You got me, that time."

I really hadn't set that up, but why miss an opportunity? My mind wanders just about like my stories; I have almost 0 attention span. A person gets tired of starting over, you know what I mean? I'd done it every time I started a story, had to define the location, after much research, yada, yada, yada. Where is it written that you can't have a bad day, every day? For me, a good day was when I was only a little depressed. I wore it like a badge, but that didn't change a thing. Not talking about it, not writing about it, nothing worked, not even the taking all of those pills. No complaints, that's just the way it is.

When we still had TV, they used to advertise some antidepressant, Cymbalta (Duloxetine)? I did my thing and looked it up, I can read, too. Hell, it was what they didn't tell on TV that was the most interesting part for me. They talked about things like liver disease and so on. Brought to mind when I complained to Dr. J that he ought to increase my Zoloft dosage. He wrote me a prescription for a Tricyclic, a drug from the '50s that had the highest rate of suicide associated with its use. Dead is pretty permanent, no thank you. If I were paranoid, I might think he was out to get me. And like Fleataxi says, *Just because you're paranoid, doesn't mean they're not out to get you.*

The Bird Flu – Chapter 21

Yes, I hear voices, but it's just me talking to myself or trying to create a conversation for the story. I might be old and tired, but I'm not suicidal.

Clarence was another story.

He absolutely refused to take any kind of rifle that looked like a military rifle. It went so far that he didn't own a rifle of any description. I wanted to remedy that, but didn't know how to. Seeing Derek shoot the M82 with the suppressor installed hadn't helped. The standard muzzle brake reduces the recoil by 70% but is loud. The Gemtech suppressor eliminated much of the sound at the expense of increasing the recoil.

At the range, he would shoot my M1A and seemed to enjoy it. Whenever the subject of him getting his own came up, he was teaching a new dance step, called the back shuffle. I began to wonder if I could embarrass him into having an M1A rifle. He had a birthday coming up and what if I gave him a loaded rifle like mine, a Tac-Force chest harness, 20 20-round magazines and a couple of cases of the Paki? I won't say I've never seen someone refuse a gift, but it hadn't happened many times in my life.

"You have that look on your face, what do you want now Dad?"

"You're familiar with my 2 M1A rifles, the Loaded version with the black synthetic stock?"

"Model Number?"

"MA9226CA with Blk. Stk. and NM barrel."

"How many?"

"Would 300 hundred be too many? And about 6,000 20-round magazines."

"How much ammo?"

"Million and half."

"Anything else?"

"300 Tac-Force Harness Tan Special Op Tactical (R) Model - 86059-T."

"Anything else?"

"300 Springfield Armory Sling, Leather, Match rifle."

"You done?"

"No, but I'm out of breath."

"Only one more question, how many do you really need?"

"Six sets consisting of: the rifle, 20 20-round magazines and 1 10-round magazine, 5,000 rounds of good surplus 147gr FMJ, a chest harness and a sling."

"That's more reasonable. Want to adjust the package?"

"A nice rifle case for each rifle would be a bonus and so would a good knife, like my Rambo knife or a Marine Ka-Bar. If you can get a Leatherman or Gerber multitool that would be great. Maybe two sets of tools for the M1A like a shell extractor, combo tool, gas cylinder wrench, chamber brush, etc."

"Cleaning supplies?"

"Add a can of Breakfree CLP and a bore snake to each package."

"Suppressors?"

"If possible, check Fountain Valley."

"Who are these for?"

"Clarence, Chris, Dick and Dave plus one each for you and Aaron."

"I'll make it 10, you left out Ron, Derek and Eric and it wouldn't hurt to have one spare."

"They're cheaper by the dozen."

"I'll try, no promises."

I gave him a list of locations in greater LA where he might find the rifles. I suggested it was unlikely he'd find the 20-round magazines and I had no idea about the surplus .308; it was as scarce as hen's teeth.

"I'll be back." (He doesn't look a bit like Arnold is and far shorter.)

o

"We checked all the places you listed and a few more besides. I have 15 Loaded rifles with the black stocks, 8 Loaded with the walnut stocks and 1 Super Match with the camo stock. The 20 round magazines are marked with a date, I think that means they're LEO only, but we found 600 of those. Couldn't find any surplus ammo. Sorry. I did find the Black Hills 7.62 in 168gr BTHP Match, 165gr BTSP Match and 175gr BTHP Match. I

hope that will do, we have 150,000 rounds. That includes 15,000 rounds of the 175gr BTHP Match. We got Ka-bars; that was all I could find. The multitool are the Wave. We only found one set of armory tools for the rifles, and settled for the Otis military cleaning kits, they're expensive."

"Sounds good."

"I'm not finished, Dad. We have SA slings and a couple of cases of Breakfree in the aerosol cans, but we couldn't find any of those Tac-force chest harnesses of any color. I hope you will settle for ALICE gear, we found plenty of that."

"Are you done or are you just catching your breath?"

"I'm done."

"Ok, the Super Match is Derek's, unless you want it. Put together one set of gear for Clarence, I think a synthetic stocked Loaded will do just fine. I don't suppose you thought of stopping in Fountain Valley, did you?"

"We got 30 for the M25s. Also found some in 5.56 and brought those, just in case. We also picked up some scopes; you'll have to check them out."

o

"Which one is this, Dad?"

"Super Match, Derek. It has a heavy match barrel, and would work best with the 175gr BTHP Match ammo. I picked out a Leopold scope with a built in BDC, it should work well. Damon got you 15,000 rounds of ammo. There's also a suppressor, if you want to use it, in the bag of supplies."

"Brand?"

"Surefire."

"Why don't you keep it?"

"I'm happy with what I have. Let Mary use my other Loaded and get some of that Black Hills 168gr BTHP Match and the 165gr BTSP. Give back the Paki, I'll shoot it up."

"Are you going to scope your rifle?"

"No, I hate scopes. I used the MUNS only because I couldn't see in the dark. I'll return it and you can put it on your new rifle."

"Don't you need it?"

"Clarence and I were taken off guard duty."

I can still recall the night he called me, all excited. The Arkansas National Guard had 6 additional Staff Sergeant slots and 3 Sergeant First Class slots. He was assured of one of the Staff Sergeant slots and had a 50-50 chance of being a Sergeant First Class before the end of the year. That's five stripes, a Gunny in the Marines, Master Sergeant in the Air Force and a CPO in the Navy. When they showed up, he was in BDU's and wearing 5 stripes and I hadn't noticed.

He later explained that he'd done well in the NCO school he'd attended and the final selections that the Guard made were the 3 top scoring candidates. Didn't sound like the military I knew, promoting on the basis of merit. Time wise, he had more time in the service than any of the other SFC candidates, 11 going on 12 years and a total of 6 years of active duty. It was the final NCO Academy he had to attend to make it to E-9. I asked what that meant if he ever got back into tanks and he said two things: 1) He'd be a Platoon Sergeant, and; 2) There would be a lot of resentment because he hadn't come up through armor ranks. (Sorry, no tanks in this story except fuel tanks.)

◦

Happy birthday, you old fart."

"Gar-ree, a rifle and all the equipment that goes with it? Is it like your rifle?"

"Identical except for the serial number. Damon got a lot of things on his last trip out. I have hunting ammo and match ammo – that's hollow point – and you can shoot to your heart's content."

"Well, I liked your rifle, sure enough, but there was no way I'd ever spend that kind of money on a rifle. Thank you."

"You'll keep it then?"

"Wouldn't be nice to refuse such a fine gift."

You see, I'd counted on that, Clarence was old school, he still had manners. They probably dropped teaching manners in high school as being politically incorrect. Chivalry was something that the knights of old had. That war in Southeast Asia had changed that, this was a far different world that the survivors came back to. I remembered the *good old days*; I was out of step with the times. Allow me to point out that that's what it might take for a person to survive in the present times, remembering the old times.

What separates our ability to restore our country to its former self? Sweat, elbow grease and probably a whole lot of luck. Most of the accumulated knowledge could be lost in a single generation. How many of us still know how to use a slide rule? An EMP wouldn't

do anything to a slide rule, while it could destroy the calculator that replaced the slide rule. Do you even know what a slide rule is?

Remember the line from Dickens, which describes the present: *the best of times, the worst of times*. Worse, we mostly did it to ourselves. It happened because we were unprepared and because we let the government control us instead of the other way around. Two natural disasters and one entirely of our own making. On occasion, I understand John the Baptist, the voice in the wilderness saying: prepare ye, the way of the Lord. They called him a Zealot. If that's what it takes to get the message across, so be it.

◦

Years ago, there were 2 rock operas I liked, *Jesus Christ, Superstar* and *Godspell*. Both were controversial in the fundamentalist community. How dare they show the human qualities possessed by the Christ, and those were the nice things that were said. They overlooked the message, take Day by Day for example:

*Day by day
Day by day
Oh Dear Lord
Three things I pray
To see thee more clearly
Love thee more dearly
Follow thee more nearly
Day by day*

Good lyric, set it to music and it became sacrilegious.

This one was based on *By the Waters of Babylon*:

*On the willows, there
We hung up our lyres
For our captors there
Required
Of us songs
And our tormentors mirth
On the willows, there
We hung up our lyres
For our captors there
Required
Of us songs
And our tormentor's mirth
Saying
Sing us one
Of the songs of Zion*

*Sing us one
Of the songs of Zion
But how can we sing?
Sing the Lord's songs?
In a foreign land?*

That's from Psalm 137, if you don't recall.

By the Waters of Babylon is a 1937 post-apocalyptic short story by Stephen Vincent Benét about life after a nuclear holocaust. Published in 1937, this was years before Hiroshima.

The plot centers around a boy named John who is the son of a priest. The priests of John's people are inquisitive scientists associated with the divine. They are the only ones who can handle metal collected from the homes (called the Dead Places) of long-dead people whom they believe to be gods. The plot follows John's self-assigned mission to get to the Place of the Gods. His father allows him to go.

John journeys through the forest for eight days, and crosses the river Ou-dis-sun (the Hudson River). Once John gets to the Place of the Gods, he feels the energy and magic there. He sees a statue of a god (a human) that says "ASHING". Completed, the name would be George Washington. He also sees a building marked "UBTREAS" (the Sub treasury Building). After being chased by dogs and sleeping in someone's apartment, John sees a dead god. Upon viewing the visage, he has an epiphany that the gods were simply humans whose power overwhelmed good judgment. After John returns to his tribe, he speaks of the places New York and Biltmore. These clues show that the Great Dead Place is in fact New York City.

When he returns home, he tells his father all that he sees, and mentions that he wants to tell everyone else. His father tells him not to, for sometimes too much truth is a bad thing, which it must be told little by little. At the end, a short sentence says, *We must build again*. This means that the people of the future should build once more great cities like those of the past. This short story is a modern parable, and shows us what could happen if we continue fighting wars with the rest of the world.

Imagine if a security leak like that happened now... not so, the Manhattan project didn't start until 1939. However, things like that had happened before, remember, 'Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea'? Written by Jules Verne and first published in 1870, there is an interesting story about the Nautilus. Hyman Rickover had a copy of the book that he read often when they were building the Nautilus. His career spanned 63 years and he was the longest serving military officer in US history. He testified before Congress:

I do not believe that nuclear power is worth it if it creates radiation. Then you might ask me why do I have nuclear powered ships. That is a necessary evil. I would sink them all. I am not proud of the part I played in it. I did it because it was necessary for the safety of

this country. That's why I am such a great exponent of stopping this whole nonsense of war. Unfortunately limits – attempts to limit war have always failed. The lesson of history is when a war starts every nation will ultimately use whatever weapon it has available." Further remarking: "Every time you produce radiation, you produce something that has a certain half-life, in some cases for billions of years. I think the human race is going to wreck itself, and it is important that we get control of this horrible force and try to eliminate it.

And, in the end, he was right. Back when we still had an internet and TV, I read a lot: ABC News, CBS News, CNN News, Fox News, MSNBC News. Then, I read the papers: Charles City Press, Chicago Tribune, Christian Science Monitor, Debkafile, Des Moines Register, Guardian Unlimited, Jerusalem Post, LA Times, London Times, New York Post, New York Times, UK Telegraph, USA Today, Washington Post and Washington Times. In those days, I wanted all the information I could get, I don't like surprises.

◦

There came that time in my life where I drew the conclusion, *it's not if, only when and what*. That came after Oklahoma City, but before 9/11. Not that I hadn't long thought that, I had. However, in the late '90s, it became a firm conviction and a conclusion. If I had any doubts, 9/11 erased them and Katrina frosted the cake. They moved the hands of the Doomsday Clock ahead 2 minutes to 5 minutes to midnight on January 17, 2007. The closest the hands had ever been was in 1953, when they were 2 minutes to midnight and stayed there for 7 years. By 1991, they were up to 17 minutes to midnight and have moved 12 minutes closer since then.

Now, we were 2 seconds or more after midnight and Clarence had been speculating what the next disaster would be. I'm happy he accepted the M1A rifle, having a short barreled shotgun and a revolver wouldn't be enough if we had trouble stacked on top of what we already had. In the 3 months after the earthquake, we had several aftershocks, while the fault settled back into its new configuration. I doubt I'll live to see LA move its way to San Francisco.

If he'd buy it, I'd sell him the .357 magnum I bought from Ron. Combined with the rifle, he'd have enough power in his armory. Because Damon went overboard when he found the ammo, I could now shoot the good stuff in my rifle. The only way to find out how it would affect my aim point was to fire some. We didn't have to comply with the Geneva Conventions because we weren't military. That meant that we could use both hollow point and soft point ammo if we chose. Going up against anyone not wearing body armor would work well with either Black Hills round. California, in its infinite wisdom didn't allow certain types of ammo. They would allow armor piercing rifle ammo but not armor piercing handgun ammo.

"Hey."

"Hay hell, hay's the first stage of horse chit. How's it going Ron?"

"You know what this is?"

"Give me a box, and I'll try to tell you."

"Remington, huh? The box is pretty dog eared. Let me look inside."

"Well?"

"Yep I know what it is, want to sell it?"

"I might, if you'll tell me what it is."

"It's old ammo that Remington hasn't manufactured in maybe 25 years. That, my friend is armor piecing ammo. Back when I worked for Target, we got in two boxes by mistake and I bought them. That was in '72."

"Damned right I'll sell it, I don't want to get caught with any illegal ammo. Say, \$25 a box?"

"I'll pay that. Why didn't you come over for Clarence's birthday?"

"I didn't know he had one."

"I gave him a M1A Loaded rifle that Damon picked up for me. You want one, we have extra?"

"How much?"

"Just what they cost us, 2 boxes of armor piecing .357 magnum ammo. I'll give you the rifle, sling and 5,000 rounds of ammo and a scope if you want one."

"Ok, I'll trade you, but I'm the one making out here."

"That all depends on how you look at it. All the stuff I'm giving you cost me was a little diesel fuel. You can't get that ammo anywhere that I know of, it's been illegal since '86."

In actual tests of the .357 commercial armor piecing ammo, it was ineffective as an armor piercing round. The bullets mentioned in the article listed were always LEO and military only. Only the tip had Teflon and they were designed to penetrate glass and metal. No cop was ever killed by the so called *cop-killer bullets*, except in movies and on TV. I'd have given the rifle and supplies to Ron anyway, but was there any reason I couldn't have a souvenir?

We already had enough items that California frowned upon, what could 2 boxes of ammo hurt? If you really want them, those so called *cop-killer bullets* are available, even in

California. The only real difference is that it costs more here than there. Some guy has a fire and they discover over 125 firearms and 60 pounds of gunpowder. In addition, he has 5 Assault Rifles, whatever those are. The answer is, an Assault Rifle is whatever they say is an Assault Rifle. Probably AR-15s, a truly 'evil' gun. Most guns capable of using high capacity magazines are illegal in California, but not all. The high capacity magazines are definitely illegal. The old NRA assertion, 'When guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns', was sure true in California. I couldn't decide whether I wanted to be Jesse James, John Wesley Hardin, Butch or Sundance. Maybe Josey Wales...

One more thing... I'm not talking about the Teflon coated bullets. I bought the ammo in 1970 when I worked for Target. It was either Winchester or Remington .357 magnum 'armor piercing' with the pointed nose. I don't know why I got rid of it. Probably didn't think the government would make it illegal.

◦

It took one click change in elevation when I began using the Black Hills ammo. The change in recoil was minor, and the improvement in grouping was much smaller. Both cartridges shot to the same point of aim. Ron was probably an average to slightly above average shooter, but Clarence was closer to Derek than to me. Like I told the guy at A Place to Shoot, the last time I'd qualified with a rifle was in '64. The last time I'd shot any rifle was in '82 when we took Lorrie to see her cousin in Victorville.

Clarence, put the scope on his rifle and sighted it in. After, he removed the scope and use the iron sights the rifle comes equipped with. He was having the same problem I had with scopes, getting your head in the right position to view the target through the scope. Both of my Amigos suggested I scope my rifle and sight it in, I could remove the scope later and it should maintain zero after removal and reinstallation. Ron liked scopes and left his on.

It's funny/strange what some of us believe in. Almost 2,500 years ago a man uttered 2 words, *Μολὼν λαβέ!*, *come and take them*. In this day and age, if you believe that, you get labeled as a survivalist or something worse and the BAFTE may do what Xerxes did, take them. *Μολὼν λαβέ!* was the reply of Sparta's King Leonidas to the Persian's demand for surrender at the battle of Thermopylae. The phrase is becoming a modern-day Second Amendment cry of resolve never to disarm in the face of tyranny. I'm sure Thomas Jefferson would understand. It's in the same vein as the expression, 'my cold dead hands'.

Before the war, I'm sure most Americans would have avoided both expressions. That was then and this is now. After I gave Derek the Super Match and gave rifles to Clarence and Ron, Damon took 3 and issued a rifle package to Dave, Dick and Chris. Two more went to Lance for Joseph and Erica's husband (never can remember his name). The remainder was locked away in the shelter. Damon and I agreed that if Lance wanted some of the leftovers for the other guards, he'd have to ask. The value of one rifle package would have cost over \$2,500 not counting the suppressor. With that and the

Harris bipod, it was closer to \$4,000. Before I got my M1A in 2006, I planned to never shoot anything except Black Hills ammo in it. Then I found out how much the high grade ammo costs and settled on SA surplus. I wish now I'd bought 10 cases.

The Paki was just about as good as the SA and it came on 5-round strippers in bandoleers and ran about \$100 for 400 rounds. You could also get it or maybe the older Indian in 20 round boxes packed 50 boxes to the can. That was past tense; by 2007, it was getting hard to find. I was asked if the US Army really use M993 and M995 armor piercing ammo. The answer is yes and it was made for us by Bofors. The Army used it in machineguns and sniper rifles. The M993 ran \$2/round and the M995 \$1.50/round. Derek had a small quantity of both cartridges and that was fine, he was officially our sniper.

◦

What's more, as we used the Paki, we saved the strippers. When Damon got that Black Hills ammo, I was ready to put some of the match ammo on strippers and place those in the bandoleers. Over the course of the next few weeks, we shot up the SA loaded in my magazines and replaced it with the Black Hills BTHP Match. To differentiate the Paki and the Black Hills, I used a felt tip and drew a line across the face of the bandoleers containing match ammo. They went into a cardboard box.

When it finally was warm enough to plant, we rototilled and prepared the seed beds. Clarence's rototiller got quite a workout and he was willing to let anyone use it. In order to know what we should plant, I did another inventory. Clarence suggested I count his 9 full bags of pinto bean in the inventory. We wouldn't need to plant those or rice, this year. We had to be careful what we grew because canning jars weren't in abundance and neither were lids.

On top of that, I'd never managed to talk Sharon into buying a large pressure canner from Canning Pantry, so we had been canning 7 quarts at a time using the same canner we bought in Davenport. There was a time when you could go to any grocery store in town and find canning lids and some stores sold Mason jars. Before these troubles, the last year we canned was 1979 when we canned tomatoes, green beans and Gayle's bread & butter pickles.

We had moved from that house to the mobile home and from there to Panorama City where we started in one apartment, moved to a second apartment, then the condo and from there to where we live now. We were living in the condo when Whittier Narrows happened and we lived here for all of the other bigger earthquakes. If it weren't for my oldest son, we wouldn't have any jars, rings or lids. He never said where he found them, but they were new, in the box, regular mouth quart Ball jars. He had all the extra lids he could find, but you can't reuse lids, so I hoped he could find more.

Oh, 25 cases, 300 jars and enough extra lids for 2 more years, 50 boxes. That made up 42 canner loads and one load that was short 1 jar. We had 2 stoves and could easily use 4 canners at the same time, if we'd had them.

The Bird Flu – Chapter 22

If you're wondering where George got the power to enforce quarantines when the bird flu broke out, look no further than here:

Executive Order: Amendment to EO 13295 Relating to Certain Influenza Viruses and Quarantinable Communicable Diseases

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 361(b) of the Public Health Service Act (42 USC 264(b)), it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Based upon the recommendation of the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Surgeon General, and for the purpose set forth in section 1 of Executive Order 13295 of April 4, 2003, section 1 of such order is amended by adding at the end thereof the following new subsection:

"(c) Influenza caused by novel or reemergent influenza viruses that are causing, or have the potential to cause, a pandemic."

"Sec. 2. This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, entities, officers, employees or agents, or any other person."

GEORGE W. BUSH
THE WHITE HOUSE,
April 1, 2005.

What they say is if someone were to arrive on an international carrier, the Executive Order gives HHS the power to detain in accordance with their mandate in Title 42.

Ever since we completed and staffed the first Atlas missile silo, we had the ability to launch on warning. That was greatly enhanced when we went to the solid fueled Minuteman Missile. Our defense was based on a triad, land based missiles, land based bombers and SSBNs. When we went to solid fuel, all we had to do was open the silo and light the engine. The Minuteman ICBM always had the theory that the missiles are at T-minus one hundred twenty seconds and holding. The Trident system and the Polaris system have been designed with a different philosophy. They're at sea and can be up and running in a matter of a few hours. But they don't try to keep them on alert all the time like the Minuteman.

Could it be that I had the numbers wrong? Under START II, we were supposed to reduce the number of warheads on each D-5 from 8 to 5. My previous figure was $14 \times 24 \times 8 = 2,688$. If we implemented START II, that would fall to $14 \times 24 \times 5 = 1,680$ plus the 500 Minuteman missiles. The Peacekeepers were gone and they had a much larger

footprint, ergo, a larger strike circle than the D-5 did. Once we got the bugs worked out of the D-5, we never had a launch failure and they were extremely accurate. They were, as one person put it, the ultimate first strike weapon. Those Titan II missiles only had a launch time of 10 minutes; they were our first fast delivery missiles.

I don't know why I bother, the war was over and we sent as many warheads as it took and probably still had some leftover in case we missed someone. The earthquake put a little of the leftover radioactive dust in the air, did I mention that? Not enough to bother us, but it did get our attention when the Kearney Meter indicated more fallout. I threw a battery in the CD V-717 just to verify that that simple meter was right.

It appeared that we could concentrate much of our canning on pickles and just do a few tomato plants and a single row of green beans. We had good luck with our potato crop the previous year and planted more hoping to sell some to the grocery stores. We could try using a small trash can as a pickle crock for the garlic dills. I didn't know if it would work or not, but why wouldn't it?

o

I'll interrupt my gardening to talk about that Super Match Rifle. I gave it to Derek because he'd end up with it anyway, eventually. I guess I don't have a poker face because he came over with the rifle, accessories and ammo and gave it back.

"What's this for? I gave you that rifle."

"I know you did. You couldn't see the look on your face when you did. I could. How long have you wanted a Super Match?"

"A while."

"There you go. Give me the Loaded I shot back in December '06 and I'll use it for now. About an hour before curfew, you and I will go sight it in for your eyes. I got an after-hours pass from the CNG."

"But..."

"But what? I'll still get it eventually, won't I?"

"Of course."

"By the way, you have two PT-1911s and I'd like one of them."

"No problem. I'll bring one with 7 magazines and 3 double mag pouches. Need a pistol belt?"

"Nope."

"I'll see you later."

o

We never knew when the grocery stores would get deliveries and what would come in. Sometimes it would be flour, sometimes sugar, sometimes salt and spices. The red letter day was when they got a shipment of paper products in. We had about 4 different grocery chains serving the community and on a good day, you could make out well by shopping all of the stores. On a bad day, they didn't even open their doors. What the hell, I planted a second row of green beans just to sell to the grocery. And that got me to thinking and I put in 6 more tomato plants that I hadn't planned on planting. They gave you a choice of credit or money and money wasn't worth the paper it was printed on. We took the credit because they reserved a portion of every shipment for credit customers.

Clarence and I helped each other too. He'd use the rototiller to run down the rows and I'd weed in the rows. Although the policy for the housing tract was that you keep your weapons with you at all times, just in case; all he ever carried was the .38. He used those 158gr round nosed lead bullets, not exactly a powerful round. He wouldn't use a holster either, preferring to jam the revolver into his waist band.

"That's got it Gar-ree, how did I get so far ahead of you?"

"I must hoe slow."

"Got another hoe?"

"Don't I wish."

"I got a hoe, I'll go get it. I think this is the last time we'll use the tiller, those plants are getting very bushy."

"Why don't you go ahead and till your garden? By then I should be done and I'll come over and help you hoe."

"I don't suppose you planted watermelon?"

"I didn't, did you?"

"I did. You know how us black folks is about watermelon. Somebody has chickens; I heard them carrying on some."

"That's the house behind Lance with the big backyard. Only 4 of the homes have the oversized backyards, Lance and Dave plus the people opposite them on Northstar."

"Are they originals or temporary?"

"Temporary. The only originals are Chris, Dick, Dave, Lance and me."

"A man could have a swimming pool and still have room for a large garden."

"True, but for some reason nobody in this tract has a pool except that aboveground pool in Damon's backyard. All the kids in the tract end up there when the water warms up."

"I wonder what he'd want for some of those chickens."

"Probably the easiest way to find out is go ask. You let him use the tiller right?"

"I tilled his ground for him. He barely said thanks and didn't offer to replace the gas either."

"I thought we got rid of most of the people like that."

"You mean the people that moved out after you shot the guy who pissed you off?"

"Yeah."

"This guy was in with that bunch but he didn't have the courage of his convictions."

"If that's the case, why did you till his garden?"

"He asked real nice like."

"Do you know if he's paid his occupation tax?"

"What's that?"

"About half his flock."

"I never heard of no such a thing."

"Tah da, it's Tax Man to the rescue."

"Are you feeling ok?"

"I feel fine. I'm just going to put that man in his place, is all. Don't worry; I've had plenty of practice doing this."

"Doing what?"

"Being a butthead. He's just lucky I don't have a hangover."

◦

"I'm with the Homeowners Association and our records show you haven't paid your occupation tax. Could I see your proof of payment?"

"What occupation tax?"

"Ignorance of the law is no excuse."

"I've lived here since the government put me here and haven't heard about any occupation tax."

"My, that means you're three years in arrears. Maybe we can work out a payment plan."

"Hey mister, have you ever heard of an occupation tax?"

Clarence answered, "Sure have."

"Have you paid occupation tax?"

"I'm not in arrears."

"How long have you lived here?"

"Since the earthquake."

"And you're not in arrears?"

"No sir, I'm not."

◦

Clarence was telling the total truth, he wasn't in arrears and he'd heard of the tax, when I'd told him about it. It was just a spur of the moment idea I'd come up with listening Clarence talk about what a jerk the guy was. Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) is levied for the privilege of occupying a room or rooms or other living space in a hotel, inn, tourist home or house, motel or other lodging (defined below) for a period of 30 days or less.

Other lodging includes, but not limited to:

- Camping sites
- Space at a campground or recreational vehicle park

The authority to levy TOT is granted to the legislative bodies of both cities and counties by a Revenue and Taxation Code. The authority to collect TOT is generally granted to the County Tax Collector by the Board of Supervisors by means of an ordinance. In some locations, it's called a Motel Tax. It had no application in the present situation. I was having fun, watching those little beads of sweat popping up on his forehead. On my first day with the IDR, Terry Edelman told me, *you don't have to be sadistic to work here, but it helps.*

◦

"Well, I've never heard of such a thing and I'm not going to pay."

"Ok," I replied. "Do you know what a jeopardy assessment is?"

"No, what is it?"

"When a taxing authority has reason to believe someone might depart their jurisdiction, they can issue a jeopardy assessment and seize sufficient property to satisfy the assessment."

"How much would that be?"

"In my experience, jeopardy assessments are intentionally high because if the estimate is low, the person may just pay up and leave, owing much more. The purpose is to protect the interests of the taxing authority and usually has very little to do with reality."

"By what authority?"

"Well, I worked for the state of Iowa and I don't know the applicable California law. The Iowa law was Code section 422.36.4. Back when Iowa adopted an income tax law, it was based on the California Code (true)."

It's all true, but I haven't really said anything. I said the records showed he hadn't paid, true, nobody paid. I attempted to divert attention away from the issue by bringing up jeopardy assessments, which almost every taxing authority has the power to make. The more he sweats, the more I was enjoying myself. I'd been out of that business since '92, but I was a good student and knew the art. You get used to be called a butthead in that business. I was always fair, but firm, just don't piss me off. If you did, you'd pay. Instead of letting something slide, I'd strictly enforce the law. I told you about the guy who I gave the 12 cent refund to, and assessed over \$700 penalty and interest. He pissed me off, and yes it really did happen. I'd come to California in '82 in total disgrace. Two years later, they made me Employee of the Month.

"Come on Clarence, I'm just wasting my breath here, we'll have to let this go up the channels."

"No, wait. I didn't know about any occupation tax. Can't we work something out?"

"What did you have in mind?"

"About the only thing I have of any value are chickens."

"And?"

"How about I give you some chickens and you fix the records?"

"Well..."

"Don't do that Gar-ree, you'll get in trouble."

"Uh..."

"I'll give you half of my chickens."

"Just this once... I don't want word of this being spread around."

◦

They tell you that there are 2 things you can't evade, death and taxes. We've been ingrained our entire lives to believe that. I believe that some taxpayers would pay a \$500 bribe to avoid paying \$100 of taxes. If you can't dazzle them with your brilliance, baffle them with your BS. Nobody has lied, not even once. Implication sometimes goes a long way. In this case, it got the Homeowner's Association half a flock of chickens and the first fresh eggs we'd had in some time. Dave had the most free space in his backyard and he provided a home for the chickens. I should have felt bad, but I didn't because Clarence said the guy was a butthead. He realized what I was doing and gave the appropriate responses. It really is just that easy, unless you run into a tax protestor.

◦

Included with the bribe I accepted came a half dozen brood hens and we didn't bother them, we wanted chicken next year too. Maybe I should have just shot the guy and taken all of his chickens, but that was too obvious. Instead we had a guy who would smile and wink whenever he saw Clarence or me. Then I gave him some of the green beans, peppers, tomatoes and cucumbers and we started to get along well. Clarence gave him some watermelon and when we dug the potatoes, I saw to it he got 2 of the 100# bags. It wasn't conscience or hush money, it was tit for tat. If he hadn't been so predictable, we'd have all lost out.

Our next problem arose when it began to cool off in the fall, where to keep the chickens. We got a roll of chicken wire and got them set up in the shelter. God help us if we needed to use the shelter again. The potatoes and onions were also in the shelter, separate-

ly stored in the storeroom. Over the course of the summer, I had some free time and began disposing of junk we had stored on the shelves lining the wall of the garage. Some of it was junk we had no use for and we put it out on a folding table to let the temporary residents pick over. Chained the table down or they'd have probably taken it, too.

From as far back as '87, there were 3 distinct crowds (Cliques) in Moon Shadows. There was the Stardust clique, consisting of south Stardust Place and Moonraker Road, the Moondance (eastern) clique and the (northern) Northstar clique. And in 20 years that hadn't changed. The big summer event was Independence Day with games in the afternoon (volleyball), the grilling session and potluck followed by the fireworks displays after sundown. That changed only when the war came when it got moved to either Dick's or Lance's backyard. For some reason, Labor Day never caught on as a group holiday.

If we were going to be attacked by vultures looking for food, the best time would have been late fall like October. From the first of October on, the security had been upgraded and Clarence and I now had a day shift on the entrance. Sharon and the girls delivered the potatoes and cashed in on our credit at the grocery stores. Each had something we needed and it worked out well. When I added their goods to the inventory, I was surprised to see good toilet paper, 12 bundles.

The word was that they thought power would be restored sometime this winter and there was only one more section of gas pipeline to repair. AmeriGas was having trouble getting propane and it didn't appear we'd be able to get refills this winter. One telephone substation at a time was coming back online. They were able to get switches somewhere, probably Japan. Our substation/switching office, that included the 285 prefix, was due back before Thanksgiving. I don't believe that includes internet; internet came through Los Angeles.

It had seemed like a very short summer, what with weeding the garden, harvesting and canning, and assessing occupation taxes. We ran a lot of security drills too; they seemed to be timed to wake me up right after I finally managed to get asleep. If I could find the guy who supplied the klaxon to Lance, I swear... It was always the same, try to get dressed quickly, putting on the chest harness, pistol belt and unlocking the rifle rack, getting the M1A and turning out. About the time I'd get locked and loaded and be coming out of the front door, the all clear siren would sound. This was for the younger generation, some of us were simply too old to respond rapidly.

"I put on a pot of coffee, it's done dripping. Another drill?"

"I guess, what time is it?"

"About 10:30. Why do you bother, it seems like that's all they ever run are drills."

"Because, the one time I didn't turn out would be the one time it was real. I'm wide awake now; I think I'll put on *Heartbreak Ridge*."

"I going back to bed but I'll leave the coffee on."

It was times like this when I missed ice cream the most. A dish of ice cream and I be sleepy in 10 minutes. I sure hope that when Eastwood fired the AK in the movie it was the sound of an AK they'd used in the soundtrack, I'd memorized that sound. *This is the AK-47 assault rifle, the preferred weapon of your enemy; and it makes a distinctive sound when fired at you, so remember it.*

Yeah right, it was the Rangers took Grenada. Except, we also used the 82nd Airborne and Marines. "Forces of the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, packed their field gear and cleaned weapons. Stateside, Army Rangers and 82nd Airborne Division paratroopers assembled and prepared for departure to Grenada." I was just getting settled down and thinking about going back to bed when the klaxon sounded a second time. I was still dressed and turned out in record time; we never had 2 drills in one night. I headed over to pick up Clarence, we were assigned backup at the front entrance.

"Twice?"

"He's never done that before, this must be the real deal."

About that time, a bullet winged its way past my left ear. I hoped someone remembered to call the Sheriff on channel 9 and get the State Military Reserve, National Guard and the Sheriff to come to our aid. We had the advantage, the roadblock was in place and there were fighting positions available to use. I wondered, Why us? The answer could be that we were the smallest housing tract in all of Palmdale. Or just maybe, they didn't know that 2 of The Three Amigos lived here. Worse, maybe they did and just didn't care.

By now, someone had turned on the halogen floodlights, adding to our advantage. There were several to prevent one shot taking all of the lights out. Clarence and I took advantage of the lights and sent some of the ones caught in the open straight to hell. There were only 17 of them, why does that number ring a bell? We could hear the sirens working their way east, all they'd get to do was count the bodies.

I can tell you why 17 rings a bell, sorta. It was 7 families that bolted after the earthquake. It appears they had friends. They knew what we were capable of producing, but must have forgotten that we had our own guard force or assumed we lacked a system of turning out the residents in rapid order. I'm not paranoid enough to believe they were just after me. If it hadn't have been for Lance and his long term relationship with the Sheriff's Department, I feel certain that they might have tried to seize our weapons. There were several M1A rifles present and all had 20-round magazines.

I didn't recognize any of them, but some of the others did. When they saw who attacked and realized that we'd killed them all, I got more than one nasty look. Even Chickenman stopped winking at Clarence and me. Darn, I'd grabbed the wrong chest harness and had used up some of my good South African ammo. Without the Dragon Skin, I might just end up dead before this is over.

"That didn't take long, Gar-ree."

"You didn't get hit or anything did you?"

"Nah, kept my head down until we got in the foxhole. I may have gotten one or two of them, did you get any?"

"The same, maybe one or two."

"Did you count the cop cars?"

"Sorry, didn't pay much attention to how many there were."

"Eleven. Plus 2 big trucks of State Military Reserves and 3 Hummers with machine guns."

"I was watching *Heartbreak Ridge* and was just about ready to turn in when we got the alarm. I guess I was lucky to still be dressed. Now, I'll have to take a pill to get to sleep, the adrenalin is really pumping."

I knew exactly how many of the attackers I'd shot, 3. I didn't know whether or not I'd killed any, I was only interested in getting them out of the fight. I wasn't cutting notches on the stock of my rifle and really didn't care if I had added to my kill total. You don't make Ace shooting bad guys or nasty neighbors. That's a distinction limited to aviators, counting their kills. I don't really know, but I doubt gunfighter's notched their revolvers grips either. I prefer to forget the people I'd shot, all 7 of them. Had I been a soldier fighting in a war, I might have succeeded, I wasn't and I didn't.

This night just made it worse, the Sheriff's Deputies draped all of the bodies before we left, a less than subtle clue had I had killed 3 more. Like the first 3, this happened so fast I didn't really have time to think, just aim and pull the trigger. I burned through less than a magazine of ammo, it only lasted minutes. At the range we were shooting, it was hard to miss, even with the adrenalin rush. It was 50'-75', darn near handgun range.

We'd started firing the moment our eyes adjusted to the lights. It was easier for us than them because they had the light in their eyes. I'll tell you, Lance had planned well, with the light and we knew who and what we were up against. If they hadn't been carrying firearms and hadn't already fired in our direction, we wouldn't have shot them. How many pills would it take to settle me down, 1, 2 or 3? I took 1 because I'd taken 2 before

I went to bed the first time. I undressed and crawled in bed. I was up 30 minutes later and took 2 Benadryl and one more anxiety pill.

The next thing I knew, I was wide awake trying to get out of bed. I was unsteady on my feet, probably from too many pills. I used the bathroom, put on my robe and made my way to my computer table. It was 11:15 according to the 24 hour clock on the wall above my computer. I guess I must have drifted off. Darn, I missed the internet. R. (Ronald) Lee had his own website. Man, would I like to see his gun collection.

I got a cuppa and was having trouble waking up. I don't know why, but I clicked on Encarta and looked up Kent State. It didn't tell me what I wanted to know, what type of rifles were the National Guardsmen using. I later found out that they were using M1 Garand's. The National Guardsmen had only CS gas, bayonets and live ammo for their rifles to control the crowd. They found themselves in an untenable position and opened fire, killing 4 students. I guess some of the deaths attributable to the Vietnam War didn't happen in Vietnam, 4 for sure.

When I could finally hold my eyes open, I decided to take a shower and shave, maybe even brush the fangs. Crap, I had to clean my rifle, too. Maybe the shower would wake me up enough that I could disassemble the rifle and get it reassembled without having parts left over.

The Bird Flu – Chapter 23

"Good afternoon."

"Is it, Clarence? Did you clean your rifle?"

"Before I went to bed, it settles me some."

"I had trouble getting to sleep and even more trouble trying to wake up."

"Is that Hoppe's I smell?"

"Nah, I use Breakfree CLP."

"That's the stuff you gave me, it works good."

"Derek recommended it. I always used Hoppe's and gun oil."

"I got me one of those Otis Tactical cleaning systems. It does everything from an air gun to a 10 gauge shotgun. Don't you have one?"

"I couldn't find one the day I went looking. What did that run you?"

"About \$40. I bought extra patches, though, it didn't include enough."

"Where did you find it?"

"Sandy Storm had them. I got it because I could clean my 12 gauge and .38 with the same cleaning kit."

"I didn't learn about them until about the time the bird flu broke out. They'd probably sold out of them by then. I have one though, Damon got it."

"I got mine long before then. Am I wrong, or are you down in the dumps?"

"I've been happier."

"What's wrong?"

"That make 7 Clarence, it's getting to me."

"You didn't remember the first 3 for 5 months and you didn't give it a second thought when you shot that guy after the earthquake. Why now, a man has a right to protect his home?"

"I don't know, it was awful easy shooting these last 3."

"I thought you only shot one or two."

"I just went along with what you said, friend. I put down 3 of them, The Deputies covered all of them with blankets; we killed all 17 of those men."

"Remember the we part Gar-ree. If you didn't consider it necessary to need to use it in the way it was intended, why did you buy a military rifle?"

"Because I wanted one?"

"You had to know that it could come to this. I mean down deep, you knew it all of the time, right?"

"I suppose."

"We did what we had to do, we didn't go hunt them down; they came against us."

◦

Later that day, Dick and Chris came around, the repairs to the pipeline were completed and we had natural gas available. They'd change out the jets and open the gas valve. Dick would use his equipment to check for leaks and they'd get everyone back onto natural gas as fast as possible. The in crowd would get theirs first and after, they'd work their way around the housing tract.

With the restoration of natural gas, electricity wasn't long coming. It was full power including enough to light the street lights. They even came out and replaced the street light across the street that had fallen down during the earthquake. It was time to stick the tanks and check the gas drums, I'd better get ready for the next one. Oh, Lord, what am I saying? The next one? We'd had 3 events, enough already! We'd recovered from the pandemic, but recovery from the war and earthquake probably wouldn't happen in my lifetime.

All the homes in the housing tract had been repaired, it didn't take much. Ron was in his home and now had a fully equipped shelter. Clarence had lost his home and now lived near to Dick, two doors north. Other than my emotional issues, my family was doing fine; we had enough food for more than a year, full tanks and good health. Damon made Sgt. Petersen (*The Green Berets*) look bad when it came to strategic reallocation. We maintained a defense force for the housing tract and had succeeded in keeping out any would be thieves. What more could a person ask for? The first thing that came to mind was the winning Lotto numbers, until I realized we hadn't had a Lottery since the bird flu pandemic.

I guess I wouldn't have been a good soldier had I gone in the Army or Marines instead of the Air Force. I may have been like Pvt. Pyle in Full Metal Jacket. *Seven-six-two mil-*

limeter. Full metal jacket. Pvt. Pyle's name was Leonard Lawrence and GnySgt. Hartman, being the ass that he was, decided to call him Gomer Pyle. You knew in the movie when Pyle flipped, you could see it in his eyes. I hope someone lets me know if that happens to me.

◦

Our country, right or wrong, has fought many wars starting with the Revolution. We had the War of 1812, 3 wars with Mexico, one Civil War, at least one with Spain, plus the big ones, WW I and WW II. We had a police action they called Korea, the undeclared war called Vietnam and a few skirmishes after that. Next came the First Gulf War, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. The final war, WW III, didn't involve a single foot soldier on the front, it was fought with missiles.

Man, the list was longer than I thought. They don't even list WW III, either. I guess they wouldn't, I downloaded that before the war. It seems that the US has an aggressive streak. Maybe it's just the company that I keep, but I heard lots of voices agreeing with me on the survivalist websites I visited. Warning Will Robinson, don't make even a tiny mistake if you write a story. Proofread – proofread – proofread and then, proofread again. Preview your story and make sure you have the spacing right. Can't do that anymore, no internet.

The pandemic, the war and the earthquake just about finished Palmdale off. Just about, although we were among the first to get the pandemic, Dubya warned us and most folks took his advice. When the war came, they blew the crap out places all around us, but didn't bother to take out the Skunk Works. There was a strip of homes along the fault line that collapsed, but some, like ours, just ended up needing repairs to the stucco and what not. We didn't replace the patio cover that Aaron cut up into firewood with the chainsaw.

After a few instances where they thought someone was trying to steal our gasoline and diesel fuel, they parked the tankers in the large empty spot between Dick's place and where the Klein's used to live. Clarence should have taken the Klein's old place; it had the best view of the entrance. It was empty, but he thought it needed too much work. It also had a very large backyard/side yard, not so deep, but very wide. Plus, I wouldn't have had to walk so far to get to his place. His place was the one where Stephanie used to live; I wonder what became of her. She was Amy's friend for a long while, a fair weather friend.

Darlene Jones had moved out back in 2006. I have no idea where she went, but I'm sure Patti knows. There was some sort of trouble after Johnny and she got divorced; her doing, but I don't know what it was all about. Guess that was what 5-6 years ago? It's near winter time and this is 10, so the coming winter must be the winter of '10-'11. I sure hope this one is more back to normal, we don't like the cold.

"Why don't you put a blade on that pickup, Dick?"

"You think it's going to snow again this year?"

"Wouldn't be a bit surprised. We've had bad winters ever since the war."

"I'll donate my pickup to the cause, but you'll to come up with a blade and get it mounted. Why don't you just put it on your pickup?"

"I hadn't thought of that, maybe I will."

"Yes?"

"You know those snow blades the mount on the front of pickups back in Iowa to plow snow in the winter?"

"Yeah, so what?"

"Here's the keys to the pickup. Bring it back with a snow blade installed."

"Any idea where I should look?"

"Try Tehachapi, they get snow every winter."

o

The timing of the disaster made some sense, at least the first two. The pandemic had been around and we had waiting for the mutation that would permit human to human airborne transmission. We knew back in 2005 that it would take months to develop and distribute an effective vaccine. We had no idea that it would contribute to a war. The local radio station, KTPI, had bits and pieces and it was Ron who first put it together. He pulled in all excited about a week after the late night shootout at the entrance.

"Hey man, I've got it."

"Don't come near me. I don't want it!"

"No, I mean I figured out why we had the war."

"We had a war because someone launched on us and we retaliated."

"That's not how it went down. I've had nothing to do for weeks but piece it together from what little world news they've had on KTPI. Syria had a major missile buildup on their Israeli border, remember? Israel decided they couldn't live with that and tried to take missiles out with their Air Force. Then they bombed Damascus and the Syrians asked for help from Tehran. They launched IRBMs against Israel and Israel sweetened the pot

with their nuclear weapons, intending to take out all of the Iranian nuclear sites. With me so far?"

"Well yeah, Israel practiced bombing flights to Gibraltar using F-16s. I suppose that could make sense."

"They used both F-15s and F-16s in the attack on Iran. They took about a dozen nuclear sites and 3-4 military installations for insurance. Russia had an agreement with Iran that sort of reminds me what JFK said during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Remember what Kennedy said about any attacks? *Third, it shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response against the Soviet Union.*"

"That's what he said, Gar-Bear. Near as I can figure Russia had a similar policy of regarding any nuclear attack against Iran by either Israel or the US, as an attack by the US on Russia."

"So Russia retaliated against us because Israel nuked Iran?"

"Yep."

"Knowing that we would make a full retaliatory response against Russia?"

"There was no way they didn't know. Anyway that triggered an exchange between Pakistan, India and China."

"Was there anyone who stayed out of it?"

"The United Kingdom and France."

"And you say you pieced this together from news pieces broadcast on KTPI? How did I miss that?"

"I've have the radio on every day from the time I get up until it's time to go to bed. It's taken months to figure it out. I thought you would be interested."

"I am, partner. I'm not totally surprised, though. How's everything going over at your house? Got that shelter fully stocked?"

"We do. Plus we have the 10,000-gallon propane tank and two remaining 550 gallon tanks. Altogether, we have 10k of propane. It's more available now so we decided to leave the house converted. You know, propane cost more, but it contains more BTUs of energy. How come you gave me the surplus ammo?"

"What? That Paki shoots good and comes on stripper clips in bandoleers. Besides you got more ammo that way, 7,000+ instead of 5,000 rounds. Things quiet over there?"

"You can hear a pin drop. How about there?"

"It had been; we got through the summer easy enough. However, night before last we had a bit of trouble."

"Anyone hurt?"

"Seventeen dead."

"Who?"

"The attackers. Lance put several security improvements in place and they didn't have a chance. You see the lights when you came in?"

"What lights?"

"Walk with me and I show you. Anyway, I was already up because Lance ran a security drill around 10:30, I stayed up to watch a movie and was just about to turn in when that damned klaxon went off a second time. I picked up Clarence on the way and we moved to that fighting position over there. Turn around. You see those lights up on the houses? They're halogen spot lamps and are focused on the area right in front of the roadblock and beyond. The lights went on and they were caught flatfooted in the open and we cut them down."

"What no challenge?"

"They replied to the challenge with gunfire, that's what set the entire thing in motion."

"What about on your side? How many dead and how many injured?"

"Zip, nada, didn't happen."

"Well, I'll be damned. We haven't had anything like that over on Sweetbrush. I wouldn't mind trading for 2 more of those M1A rifles, provided you have them."

"Walnut stock ok? Same set up except the ammo?"

"Well, we'd still have around 2,500 rounds per rifle, sure why not?"

"What can you offer in trade?"

"I don't know, what do you need?"

"Know anywhere I could get another 5,000-gallon diesel tank?"

"Maybe, but I can't get you any fuel."

"We have fuel, Ron; lots of fuel. I don't really have a place to bury another tank, so I'd set it up aboveground."

"I'm sure my friend at AmeriGas can find me a tank. The weather doesn't look good, I'd better hurry; it looks like it could snow."

"I'll get two complete rifle setups ready to go for you. Damon went to Tehachapi to find a snow blade for my pickup."

"I'll be back, Gar-Bear."

"You're starting to sound like Arnold."

o

I had the rifle bundles ready to go, except for the ammo so I got 2 of the walnut stocked rifle bundles and put them in my office. Not long after, Damon showed up and had a blade mounted on the borrowed pickup. It was one of the fancy ones I was familiar with from when I'd lived in Iowa. It could be raised, lowered, and canted left or right. It was exactly what I had in mind. Two hours later, Ron returned and behind him was a trailer bearing a large diesel tank and behind that a crane to lift the tank over the house.

"Sorry, couldn't get you a 5,000-gallon tank. The only one he knew of was a 10,000-gallon tank."

"In that case, I'll throw in 5,000-rounds of Black Hills match ammo."

"Where do you want it?"

"Behind the shed, on top of the buried tank, up against that short wall at the back."

"He got you 3 cradles to set the tank in."

"I'll show him, Dad," Derek offered. "Then I'll use some of that hose to plumb it into the other tank."

"Do you have enough fuel to fill the tank?"

"We're down to 12,000 gallons of diesel, I have extra."

"Gar, I had to promise him a rifle for the tank, including 5,000 rounds of ammo."

"Come help me get the ammo and another rifle from the shelter. Better yet, I'll get Aaron to help, that stuff is heavy."

"Aaron, I need 20 of the 500 round cases of Black Hills and one rifle bundle. Make it a rifle with a walnut stock."

An hour later they were done, Ron had his rifles and ammo and Derek was pumping diesel fuel through a long hose filling the tank. It wasn't a fast pump, ~10gpm, he'd be pumping for hours. While it was pumping, he added fresh PRI-D. He also had time to add PRI-G to my drums of gasoline. He shut down for dinner and resumed pumping later. He mentioned, that it would take ~17 hours to fill the tank; he'd be done sometime tomorrow.

"Now I have a question, why 2 rifles and not 3?"

"What do you mean?"

"You already have one. You have 2 stepsons and 1 son-in-law. 1, 2 3, why didn't you ask me for 3 rifles for yourself? I ended up with 8 of those walnut stocked M1As and I preferred not to pass them out, the synthetic stock doesn't warp. Who were the 2 rifles for?"

"John and Brenda. Her hubby will use it of course. I'm not crazy enough to give Kevin a gun."

"Don't you think you should take one more and put it up for when you have trouble?"

"I was really hoping we wouldn't have any. Our house is buried in the middle of that tract of homes, not out in the open like your housing tract. You have a Target across the street, a restaurant on the east side of your tract and a Costco store less than ½ a mile away. We're situated halfway between your conglomeration and all those stores at Avenue S and 47th. It's been real quiet so far."

"I'm going to get you another one of those rifles. You can store it in one of your gun safes until you need it. If you don't want to let Kevin use it, let Brenda, I'll bet she can shoot."

"You might as well make it 2 more, 1 for Kevin and 1 for Brenda. Lyn won't touch a gun or I'd ask for 1 for her too."

"Aaron, another 10,000-rounds of Black Hills and 2 more rifles with the walnut stocks, if you please."

"Are you sure, Grandpa? Do you want all hollow point or should I add some of the soft point?"

"Add in 4 half cases of soft point and make the remainder hollow point. Put it in Ron's pickup with the rest of the stuff."

"Dad, I'm breaking for dinner, that tank is about half full."

"Jeez, is it that late? I better get going, partner, thanks for the guns and ammo."

"Thank you for the pair of 5,000-gallon tanks."

I would have rather had 2 more 5,000-gallon tanks than a single 10,000-gallon tank. A large tank, especially one that wasn't buried, put a lot eggs in one basket. The only advantage I could see was that the fuel was in my backyard and not in a truck ½ a block down the street. There were only 3 of the walnut stocked M1As left.

◦

It wasn't all that long before we got our first snowfall of the winter. Does anyone know how long a nuclear winter/nuclear summer cycle lasts? Lance issued an edict that prohibited parking on the street, thereby allowing Damon free rein with the snow blade. It seemed more like Iowa than southern California.

A study presented at the annual meeting of the American Geophysical Union in December 2006 found that even a small-scale, regional nuclear war could produce as many direct fatalities as all of WW II and disrupt the global climate for a decade or more. In a regional nuclear conflict scenario where two opposing nations in the subtropics would each use 50 Hiroshima-sized nuclear weapons (ca. 15 kiloton each) on major populated centers, the researchers estimated fatalities from 2.6 million to 16.7 million per country. Also, as much as five million tons of soot would be released, which would produce a cooling of several degrees over large areas of North America and Eurasia, including most of the grain-growing regions. The cooling would last for years and could be *catastrophic* according to the researchers.

You'll notice that they didn't say 'could last', but 'would last'. That was basically what would happen if Pakistan and India went at it. They did, as Ronald explained, but China was involved and the US and Russia exchanged weapons, at the end of missiles. That doesn't even consider what Israel did to Iran or what others did to Israel. That was years as in more than one. So far the weather was bearing out their speculation. The report also talked about growing conditions in the grain belt, indicating that there wouldn't be much grain for several years. Taking that to its logical conclusion, starvation would exist for a while, further reducing the population.

That applied to our housing tract. As long as we were producing food, we were inviting people looking for food and probably fuel; we made no attempt to hide the tankers. The shooting was all over the news, too. One would think that with a total of 20 people being killed trying to break into the tract, the word might have gotten around to leave us alone. The other side of that coin was that we had something in the tract worth risking your life

to get. I considered vacating our house and moving into the Klein house. I've mentioned that front bedroom window in previous stories. Instead, we occupied the house as the headquarters for the Homeowners Association. We moved some of our weapons, ammunition and ordnance (grenades, M203 and 40mm grenades and 15 LAWs rockets) there instead. I also pulled my CM300 business radio and mounted the antenna on the roof.

◦

I Want to Know What Love Is, a song recorded by the Foreigner. Sharon had more than one season of Cold Case recorded, that TV show with Kathryn Morris. One of the episodes involved a young man who liked to dance and was murdered by his brother. I liked Cold Case, not so much for the story, but for the music the show included. That song was in this show. Three of the movies I had in my collection were Flash Dance, Dirty Dancing and Footloose, all of them because of the music.

◦

We had a problem in this country before the bird flu struck and WW III only magnified it. I'll mention it one more time, think about it. We have fewer emergency rooms today than we had on 9/11. Most of them are inadequately equipped and don't have enough ventilators and very little knowledge about treating casualties of radioactivity.

Did I already refer you to: remm.nlm.gov? Can't remember. I downloaded the entire website to my computer, it's available as a 52mb zip file. It might not be of much use to you, it's aimed at medical personnel. If nothing else, I have the resources and can probably figure out why I'm dying. Your best bet if you get the bird flu is probably something like Tamiflu or Relenza. The hospital won't have a vaccine and probably won't have a ventilator to put you on.

I preach preparedness, as in, get your Tamiflu NOW. Get your N-95 or N-100 masks NOW. If you wait, you won't be able to get either, should you need them. Unfortunately, most of us don't have a bomb shelter; we stopped building them in the late '50s, early '60s. The only time in history we were closer to a nuclear war was during the Cuban Missile Crisis. We've been working on our preps for a few months now and have just a very minimum of the things we need. I'd guess ~90 day food supply, 6 months on most of the drugs, but at least 90 days on all of them. Yes, I did buy a M1A, loaded and 2,000 rounds of SA ammo. It's an exceptionally fine rifle, I love it. I have the PowerBOSS 7kw portable generator but far too little gasoline.

There is some kind of disaster around every corner, both man-made and natural. Whether we admit it or not, we're experiencing a global climate change. We've had a pandemic looming for some time and Russia and China are busy building up their militaries. Instead of being home minding our own business, we're engaged in a 4th generation war with terrorists. We tried to fight a 4th generation war in the '60s and '70s and

lost. Russia tried to fight a 4th generation war in the '80s and lost. Now, we're trying again and are losing. They don't use the same rulebook we use.

I'd recommend preparing for the worst and hoping for the best. Or sit here with our heads stuck where the sun doesn't shine. Our government has forgotten that it's supposed to be a government of the people, by the people, for the people. That's sad because it's the only government we have. They're all too busy being Republicans and Democrats to be real leaders. I'm sure that some of them really care about us, but not nearly as many as claim they do.

Thanks for reading, TOM out. I would like to thank TexasPrepper for proofreading this mess and cleaning it up. We got about 98% of the typos.

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